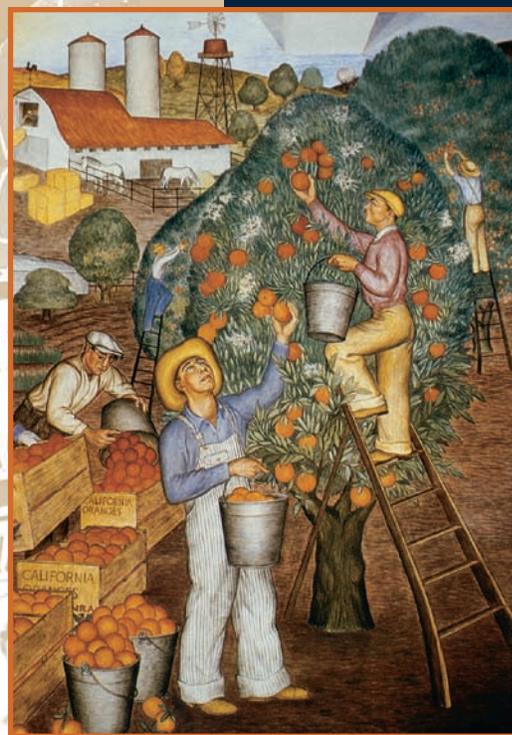
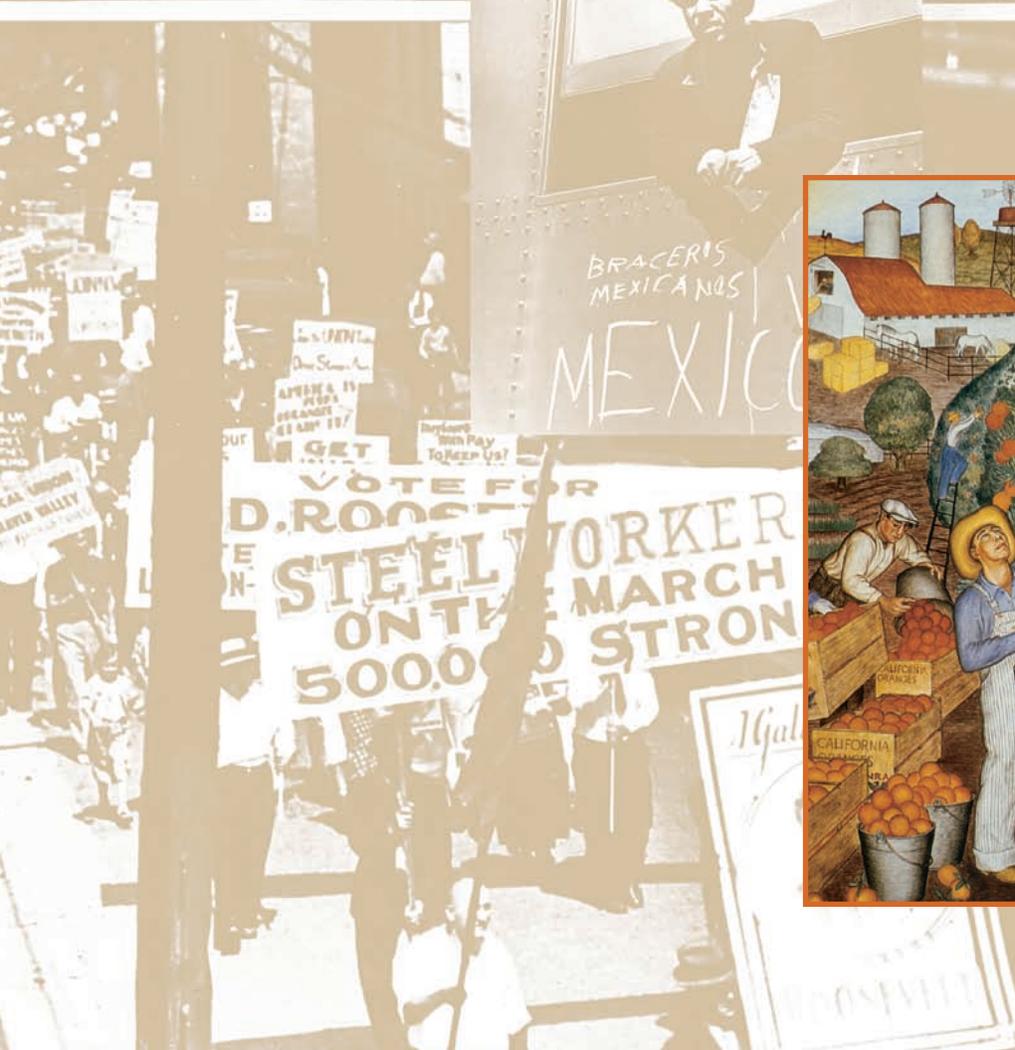
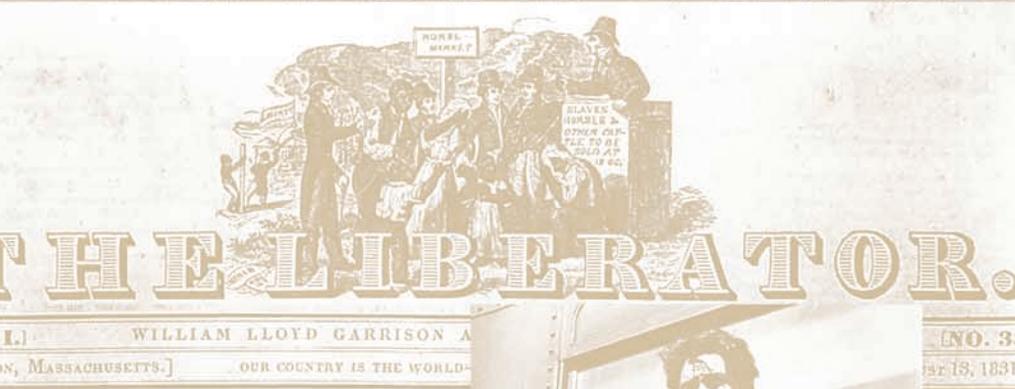


UNITED STATES HISTORY

1930-1950

Creating Economic Citizenship: The Depression and the New Deal— Part II



**PLEASE SEE
NOTES ON
THE PDF,
PAGE 4.**

LESSONS IN US HISTORY

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THE UCI CALIFORNIA HISTORY-SOCIAL SCIENCE PROJECT

The California History-Social Science Project (CH-SSP) of the University of California, Irvine, is dedicated to working with history teachers in Orange County to develop innovative approaches to engaging students in the study of the past. Founded in 2000, the CH-SSP draws on the resources of the UCI Department of History and works closely with the UCI Department of Education. We believe that the history classroom can be a crucial arena not only for instruction in history but also for the improvement of student literacy and writing skills. Working together with the teachers of Orange County, it is our goal to develop history curricula that will convince students that history matters.

HUMANITIES OUT THERE

Humanities Out There was founded in 1997 as an educational partnership between the School of Humanities at the University of California, Irvine and the Santa Ana Unified School District. HOT runs workshops in humanities classrooms in Santa Ana schools. Advanced graduate students in history and literature design curricular units in collaboration with host teachers, and conduct workshops that engage UCI undergraduates in classroom work. In the area of history, HOT works closely with the UCI History-Social Science Project in order to improve student literacy and writing skills in the history classroom, and to integrate the teaching of history, literature, and writing across the humanities. The K-12 classroom becomes a laboratory for developing innovative units that adapt university materials to the real needs and interests of California schools. By involving scholars, teachers, students, and staff from several institutions in collaborative teaching and research, we aim to transform educational practices, expectations, and horizons for all participants.

THE SANTA ANA PARTNERSHIP

The Santa Ana Partnership was formed in 1983 as part of the Student and Teacher Educational Partnership (STEP) initiative at UC Irvine. Today it has evolved into a multi-faceted collaborative that brings institutions and organizations together in the greater Santa Ana area to advance the educational achievement of all students, and to help them enter and complete college. Co-directed at UC Irvine by the Center for Educational Partnerships, the collaborative is also strongly supported by Santa Ana College, the Santa Ana Unified School District, California State University, Fullerton and a number of community based organizations. Beginning in 2003-2004, HOT has contributed to the academic mission of the Santa Ana Partnership by placing its workshops in GEAR UP schools. This unit on *Creating Economic Citizenship: The Depression and the New Deal—Part II* reflects the innovative collaboration among these institutions and programs.

CONTENT COUNTS: A SPECIAL PROJECT OF THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

This is one in a series of publications under the series title Content Counts: Reading and Writing Across the Humanities, supported by a generous grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Content Counts units are designed by and for educators committed to promoting a deep, content-rich and knowledge-driven literacy in language arts and social studies classrooms. The units provide examples of “content reading”—primary and secondary sources, as well as charts, data, and visual documents—designed to supplement and integrate the study of history and literature.

Additional external funding in 2003-2004 has been provided to HOT by the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, UC Links, the Bank of America Foundation, the Wells Fargo Foundation, and the Pacific Life Foundation.



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Creating Economic Citizenship: The Depression and the New Deal—Part II

UNIT INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS

This unit explores the changing relationship between the American people and the United States government during the 1930s. During these years, Americans experienced the first major recession of the modern economy, resulting in intensified rural-to-urban migrations, federal regulation of the economy, and the passage of legislation (the National Labor Relations Act) that established workers' right to collective bargaining. The Depression also affected American culture, as New Deal programs celebrated workers and working-class culture, especially in comparison to the consumer-happy culture of the 1920s.

The Depression led to the creation of “economic citizenship,” a phrase that describes the redefined relationship between citizens and the federal government created by the New Deal. [Note: the unit lessons do not use the phrase “economic citizenship”.] Historian Eric Foner, who has examined the definition of “freedom” in the United States beginning with the Revolution, has written that the New Deal caused Americans to redefine “freedom” to include social citizenship, which encompassed social welfare programs such as old age assistance and unemployment insurance in addition to political rights such as the exten-

sion of the franchise to African Americans and women. Foner writes, “the Depression discredited the idea that social progress rested on the unrestrained pursuit of wealth and transformed expectations of government, reinvigorating the Progressive conviction that the national state must protect Americans from the vicissitudes of the marketplace.” Foner notes that, during Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s second New Deal, the “right to work” and the “right to live” became “no less central to citizenship than ‘the right to vote,’” meaning that “the same federal government that protected ‘political freedom’ had an obligation to act against ‘economic slavery.’”

Of course, there was vocal opposition to the New Deal from the Right, which argued that the changes were akin to socialism and would rob Americans of their individualism and self-reliance. Newspaper editors and political cartoonists were frequent critics of the Roosevelt administration. Opposition also appeared on the Left, as some believed that the reforms and regulations did not go far enough to guarantee Americans economic security. Dissenting voices included Huey Long and Father Charles Coughlin, and, in California, Upton Sinclair and Francis Townsend. By the end of

the unit, students should be able to write their opinion of whether the New Deal went too far or not far enough in its reforms.

This unit includes an extensive teaching guide for the Great Depression, though teachers may wish to supplement the lesson plans with an overview of the causes of the Depression as well as videos and music created during the era. This unit shifts the focus to California for lessons 7 and 8, as it examines the local impact of the Depression through an examination of agricultural workers. These lessons cover the plight of farm workers into the 1950s. In Lesson 9, students learn how working-class culture influenced American life in the 1930s. Students read excerpts from *The Grapes of Wrath*, examine murals and posters created by artists working for the WPA, and listen to songs by Woody Guthrie. Lesson 10, the final lesson of the unit, asks students to assess the long-term impact of the New Deal on American politics and society. Students will see how issues such as the federal role in the economy, the rights of organized labor, and the existence of social benefit programs continue to be debated in American life. The unit concludes with an essay assignment that asks students to evaluate the changes in government and American capitalism

during the 1930s. To guide their responses, students are given a range of possible topic sentences to use in their introductory paragraph. Teachers may assign the

essay for homework, requiring students to support their arguments with evidence gleaned from the documents in this unit. The essay could also be used as

an in-class essay, although teachers may want to allow students to bring in outlines for their responses.

NOTES ON THE PDF:

1) Please note that in this pdf document the page numbers are two off from the printed curriculum. For example, page 2 in the printed curriculum is now page 4 in this pdf document.

2) We apologize if some of the hyperlinks are no longer accurate. They were correct at the time of printing.

3) Full-page versions of the images in this unit—some in color—can be found at the back of this pdf.

4) You can easily navigate through the different parts of this document by using the “Bookmark” tab on the left side of your Acrobat window.

HISTORY STANDARDS COVERED IN THIS UNIT

Skills

■ Chronological and Spatial Thinking

- Students analyze how change happens at different rates at different times; understand that some aspects can change while others remain the same; and understand that change is complicated and affects not only technology and politics but also values and beliefs.
- Students use a variety of maps and documents to interpret human movement, including major patterns of domestic and international migration, changing environmental preferences and settlement patterns, the frictions that develop between population groups, and the diffusion of ideas, technological innovations, and goods.

■ Historical Research, Evidence, and Point of View

- Students evaluate major debates among historians concerning alternative interpretations of the past, including an analysis of authors’ use of evidence and the distinctions between sound generalizations and misleading oversimplifications.

■ Historical Interpretation

- Students show the connections, causal and otherwise, between particular historical events and larger social, economic, and political trends and developments.
- Students interpret past events and issues within the context in which an event unfolded rather than solely in terms of present-day norms and values.

Content standards

- **11.6. Students analyze the different explanations for the Great Depression and how the New Deal fundamentally changed the role of the federal government.**
 - 11.6.3. Discuss the human toll of the Depression, natural disasters, and unwise agricultural practices and their effects on the depopulation of rural regions and on political movements of the left and right, with particular attention to the Dust Bowl refugees and their social and economic impacts in California.
 - 11.6.4. Analyze the effects of and the controversies arising from New Deal economic policies and the expanded role of the federal government in society and the economy since the 1930s (e.g., Works Progress Administration, Social Security, National Labor Relations Board, farm programs, regional development policies, and energy development projects such as the Tennessee Valley Authority, California Central Valley Project, and Bonneville Dam).
 - 11.6.5. Trace the advances and retreats of organized labor, from the creation of the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations to current issues of a postindustrial, multinational economy, including the United Farm Workers in California.
- **11.8. Students analyze the economic boom and social transformation of post-World War II America.**
 - 11.8.2. Describe the significance of Mexican immigration and its relationship to the agricultural economy, especially in California.
- **11.9. Students analyze U.S. foreign policy since World War II.**
 - 11.9.7. Examine relations between the United States and Mexico in the twentieth century, including key economic, political, immigration, and environmental issues.

KEY TERMS

Collective bargaining—negotiation between an employer and a labor union especially on issues such as pay, working conditions, and hours.

Depression—a period of decreased economic activity, often marked by low production and rising levels of unemployment.

Economic history—history that examines actions that are related to the production, distribution, or consumption of goods or services.

Economic citizenship (also social citizenship)—the idea that the “right to work” and the “right to live” are central guarantees of American citizenship in need of protection from the federal government. By guaranteeing economic rights as well as political rights, the New Deal changed the relationship between the federal government and its citizens. In this unit, “economic citizenship” and “social citizenship” are used interchangeably.

Political history—history that examines government and activities related to government (e.g., political parties).

Popular Front—the Communist Party’s cooperation with the noncommunist liberal left as an effort to combat fascism. The Popular Front made an effort to appeal to a wide

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Overview

* Robert S McElvaine (editor), *Down and Out in the Great Depression: Letters from the “Forgotten Man”* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983). McElvaine has collected and organized a cross-section of letters addressed to occupants of the White House during the Great Depression, including Herbert Hoover as well as both Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt.

Robert S. McElvaine, *The Great Depression: America, 1929-1941* (New York: Times Books, 1984). This survey tells the story of the Depression from the perspective of average Americans using sources such as letters, interviews, and film.

Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998). In his chapter on the Depression, Foner argues that the New Deal caused Americans to redefine “freedom” to include social citizenship rather than simply political rights.

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Labor and Culture

Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Cohen examines how the CIO union encouraged workers to merge their identities as consumers with their shop-floor experiences in order to create a successful union culture.

Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: the Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso, 1996). Denning shows how the Left came to dominate Depression-era culture through the Popular Front, a coalition of progressives and communists who opposed fascism during the 1930s.

Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999). Originally published a few months after John Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath* in 1939, this work argues that farms in California were in reality “factories in the field” that relied on and abused a steady stream of migrant workers dating back to the nineteenth century.

Race, Deportations, and the Depression

* Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995). Balderrama and

Rodriguez document the efforts to repatriate Mexicans during the 1920s and 1930s, when white Californians claimed—without evidence—that they were taking jobs away from “native” workers and draining resources by receiving unemployment benefits. In 1931, the city of Los Angeles repatriated about one-third of its Mexican population (approximately 50,000), many of whom were children born in the United States and therefore citizens.

James Goodman, *Stories of Scottsboro* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994). Goodman tells the story of the Scottsboro case—the trial of nine black adolescents falsely accused of raping two white women in Alabama in 1931—from multiple perspectives.

* Francisco Jiménez, *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997). In this collection of short stories, Jiménez recalls his years working on “the circuit” of harvests as a child in California during the 1940s and 1950s.

Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990). Kelley examines the activities of the Alabama Communist Party and its organization efforts among African Americans during the years of the Depression.

* John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* (New York: The Viking Press, 1939). This classic novel documents the westward journey of an Oklahoma family in the wake of the Great Depression. See also, *The Harvest Gypsies* (Berkeley: Heyday, 1988). Steinbeck’s original series of seven articles on the new migrant labor in Southern California ran in the *San Francisco News* from October 5 – 12, 1936. Here, all are reprinted with an introduction by Charles Wallenberg.

* Denotes a primary source or a work with primary sources that could be used in the classroom.

Primary sources available on the Web

America in the 1930s: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~1930s/front.html>. This is an online collection of film, print, and radio sources collected by the American Studies program at the University of Virginia.

American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers’ Project, 1936-1940: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/wpaintro/wpahome.html>. This site features thousands of life histories collected by the WPA between 1936 and 1940. The collection is searchable.

audience through popular culture. It ended in 1939, when the Soviet Union agreed to a non-aggression pact with Germany.

Social history—history that explores the interaction of individuals and groups.

Socialism—a system in which the state (government) owns and controls the production and distribution of goods. Many conservatives argued that the New Deal programs would bring socialism to the United States.

ASSESSMENT

See the final page of the unit for writing prompt.

By the People, For the People: Posters from the WPA, 1936-1943: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/wpaposters/wpahome.html>. This is a searchable collection of posters produced from 1936 to 1943 as part of the New Deal.

The Farm Security Administration-Office of War Information (FSA-OWI) Collection: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/fsowhome.html>. This searchable collection of photographs documents both rural and urban life and the negative impact of the Great Depression, farm mechanization, and the Dust Bowl. The FSA-OWI employed photographers such as Dorothea Lange and Russell Lee.

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library: <http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/>. This site offers an extensive (and searchable) array of public domain photographs that document New Deal leaders, programs, and events.

Roland Marchand Collection: <http://marchand.ucdavis.edu/>. This site includes the entire slide collection of historian Roland Marchand. The collection, organized by topic, features some excellent images of working-class culture and New Deal ephemera.

New Deal Network: <http://newdeal.feri.org/>. This website, organized by topic, includes links to photographs, speeches, and letters, as well as several lesson plans for high school teachers.

Prelinger Archive of Moving Images: <http://www.archive.org/details/prelinger>. This is a vast collection of twentieth-century moving image films that are in the public domain. The collection includes footage of the Griffith Park Relief Workers Demonstration and the San Francisco General Strike.

How did the Great Depression affect Mexican Americans in California? What kind of disparity existed in federal protection for industrial workers and agricultural workers?

INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS

Although the Depression affected the entire nation, the economic downturn and drought had a particularly harsh impact on the state of California. Historians have estimated that approximately 350,000 Dust Bowl refugees—white farmers from Midwestern states who lost their jobs and land due to drought—migrated to California during the 1930s to find work. The journey of the “Okies” was famously chronicled by John Steinbeck in *The Grapes of Wrath* and by folk singer Woody Guthrie in *Dust Bowl Ballads*, but these migrants were not the only “California story” of the Depression. This lesson examines the hardships endured by Mexican Americans who worked in the agriculture industry between the 1930s and the 1950s. While not all Mexicans worked in the fields, this lesson will specifically examine the effects of the Depression and New Deal programs on migratory workers.

The Depression’s impact on Mexican-American farm workers is rooted in the history of agriculture in California. During the early twentieth century, immigrants from Mexico began to work in the agriculture fields of California in large numbers. Large-scale farms had previously relied on Chinese and Japanese workers to harvest their crops. In the 1920s, however, the federal government passed a law limiting the number of migrants who could legally cross the border into the United States from Mexico (immigration from Mexico had previously been unlimited). These laws adversely affected Mexican workers. Mexicans continued to cross the border—often at the behest of growers, who needed labor to harvest crops—but, as illegal immigrants, they were denied legal standing. As a result, if Mexican workers attempted to improve their living conditions or wages by organizing unions, growers could retaliate by having them arrested or deported.

In a history of California agriculture published the same year as *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), critic Carey McWilliams argued that farms were in reality “factories in the field,” suggesting that large land owners dominated the increasingly industrialized agriculture business in California. And while the federal government had taken steps to assist industrial labor in the cities as part of the New Deal, less effort was expended to help farm workers protect their rights. Despite exploitation and fears about deportation, many Mexican laborers became active in labor unions during the 1930s. In the San Joaquin valley in 1933, 12,000 cotton pickers, many of whom were Mexican, went on strike; the same year, thousands of Mexican workers organized by the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union struck to protest wages and working

STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS LESSON

Skills

■ Chronological and Spatial thinking

- Students use a variety of maps and documents to interpret human movement, including major patterns of domestic and international migration, changing environmental preferences and settlement patterns, the frictions that develop between population groups, and the diffusion of ideas, technological innovations, and goods.

■ Historical Interpretation

- Students show the connections, causal and otherwise, between particular historical events and larger social, economic, and political trends and developments.
- Students interpret past events and issues within the context in which an event unfolded rather than solely in terms of present-day norms and values.

Content standards

- **11.6. Students analyze the different explanations for the Great Depression and how the New Deal fundamentally changed**

the role of the federal government.

- 11.6.3. Discuss the human toll of the Depression, natural disasters, and unwise agricultural practices and their effects on the depopulation of rural regions and on political movements of the left and right, with particular attention to the Dust Bowl refugees and their social and economic impacts in California.
- 11.6.5. Trace the advances and retreats of organized labor, from the creation of the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations to current issues of a postindustrial, multinational economy, including the United Farm Workers in California.
- **11.8. Students analyze the economic boom and social transformation of post-World War II America.**
 - 11.8.2. Describe the significance of Mexican immigration and its relationship to the agricultural economy, especially in California.
- **11.9. Students analyze U.S. foreign policy since World War II.**
 - 11.9.7. Examine relations between the United States and Mexico in the twentieth century, including key economic, political, immigration, and environmental issues.

conditions in the berry fields. In all, farm workers staged thirty-seven strikes in California in 1933 alone.

The imbalance between industrial and agricultural workers continued even after the United States entered World War II. When the United States entered war in 1941, many of the farms experienced labor shortages as white workers entered the armed services or better-paying defense industry jobs. To ease the labor shortage, the United States and Mexico established the *bracero* program in which Mexican workers were allowed to enter the United States on a temporary basis to work on contract for American farmers. The agreement stipulated that workers should be treated fairly. However, while most workers spoke only Spanish, they signed contracts written in English that denied them many basic rights, including the right to organize. Because they were in the United States at the behest of their US-based employers, workers were expected to leave at the end of their contracts. Between 1942 and 1947, about 250,000 Mexican workers were brought to the U.S. to work in the fields. By the time the program ended in 1964, more than 5 million farm workers entered the United States under this agreement, even as other workers continued to enter the country illegally.

Lesson Goals

This lesson is designed to help students understand the continued impact of the Depression on a particular group of people (Mexican agricultural workers) in a particular place (California). Unlike most other modules in this unit, which focus solely on the 1930s, this lesson follows the story of Mexican farm workers into the postwar era. Students will learn about the impact of the Depression on farm workers and on racial minorities. Moreover, they will see a disparity between the gains made by industrial workers (discussed in Lesson 5) and the agricultural workers covered by this module.

There are a number of themes that relate to this lesson. Teachers may wish to teach this lesson in connection to Lesson 3, which emphasizes perspectives and conflicts between groups during the Depression. The lesson also fits with Lesson 5, as it reveals some of the limitations of New Deal reforms. Thanks to John Steinbeck and Woody Guthrie's work, Americans may have been familiar with the plight of agricultural workers, but farm workers did not benefit from the New Deal programs. This lesson could also be used as a companion history lesson for students reading *The Grapes of Wrath* in Language Arts or watching parts of the film in History class.

Discussion Guide for Teachers

Format: This lesson may be taught as a discussion, in small groups, or in pairs.

This lesson uses three kinds of sources—photographs by Dorothea Lange, newspaper articles by John Steinbeck, and a memoir by Francisco Jiménez—to document the history of migratory labor in California between the 1930s and the 1950s. It approaches the topic as a social historian would, emphasizing the kinds of work that laborers undertook, the living conditions and communities in labor camps, and additional strategies that families developed to survive the difficult circumstances. Teachers should note that Jiménez worked in the fields after the war, while the works by Steinbeck and Lange were created during the 1930s; still, many of the conditions of farm workers remained unchanged during these years.

The lesson is divided into a series of questions addressed in the sources. The first question asks why California agriculture required the use of migratory labor. To answer this question, students read a brief excerpt drawn from John Steinbeck's *The Harvest Gypsies*, a seven-part story written for the *San Francisco News* in 1936 that became the basis for his novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*. Students learn that most farms needed a large labor force only during the harvest; they also learn a few details about how migratory laborers were treated by communities. Students read another excerpt from *The Harvest Gypsies* to understand why Mexican workers dominated the labor force during the early twentieth century, and why white workers began to displace these Mexican workers in the fields during the 1930s. The excerpt also reviews some of the repressive tactics undertaken to prevent workers from organizing unions. Having established the larger context, the third section focuses on the tasks performed by agricultural laborers and the ways that families divided tasks among themselves. This section features photographs and includes an excerpt from Francisco Jiménez's memoir, *The Circuit*. Students should observe the ways that children and teenagers contributed to their families' survival, as they helped with childcare, household tasks, and even work in the fields; in the excerpt from *The Circuit*, they will also see how "domestic" tasks such as cooking provided another potential income source for farm laborers. The fourth and fifth sections focus on living conditions in the labor camps. Students have the opportunity to synthesize information from all three sources; in the fourth section, it is particularly important for students to see how laborers attempted to supplement their incomes by, for example, recycling materials from the city dump or searching for additional nutritious foods to stave off disease. In the fifth section, students read an excerpt drawn from *The Circuit* in which Francisco Jiménez recalls his infant brother's serious sickness. In addition to revealing the basic lack of medical services at the camp, the excerpt shows the folk cures and religious traditions that Mexican migratory workers brought with them to California. The excerpt

TIME REQUIRED

- Two class periods. This lesson, particularly the writing assignment, could also be partially assigned as homework, since it is self-contained. The lesson will take less time if teachers excerpt from the lesson.

MATERIALS

- Copies of reading material; students do not need to read every excerpt.

also suggests the ways that neighbors in the farm camps tried to help each other.

There are several ways to assess Lessons 7 and 8. First, there is the larger writing assessment on the New Deal; the hardships of migratory workers and the deportations of Mexican Americans might certainly be included on a list of shortcomings of the New Deal. Second, the lessons about Mexican migrant workers were developed with a poster project that teachers may opt to use, although the lessons certainly work without this assignment. In contrast to the expository essay, this poster project asks students to empathize with migratory workers of the Depression and post-World War II era through a variety of options, such as illustrations, poems, suggested reforms, or questions for the authors. Instructions for this poster project are included with Lesson 8. Third, as already mentioned, this lesson includes a shell paragraph writing exercise that shows students how to connect everyday details to a larger context. Finally, teachers may wish to use just a few pieces of this lesson and evaluate student answers to the questions that follow each excerpt.

How did the Great Depression affect Mexican Americans in California? What kind of disparity existed in federal protection for industrial workers and agricultural workers?

INTRODUCTION FOR STUDENTS

In this lesson, you will learn how the Depression affected California's agriculture industry and its workers, many of whom were Mexican American. During the early twentieth century, immigrants from Mexico began to work in the agriculture fields of California in large numbers. In the 1920s, however, the federal government passed a law limiting the number of migrants who could legally cross the border into the United States from Mexico (there had previously been no limits on immigration from Mexico). Mexicans continued to cross the border to find jobs but, as illegal immigrants, they did not have legal rights.

Conditions worsened for Mexicans during the 1930s. Historians believe that approximately 350,000 Dust Bowl refugees—white farmers from Midwestern states who lost their jobs and land due to drought—came to California during the 1930s to find work; their journey was famously chronicled

by John Steinbeck in *The Grapes of Wrath*. The Dust Bowl refugees were very poor when they arrived in California, and they were willing to work for extremely low wages. At the same time, many Anglos (white Americans) argued that Mexicans, many of whom had lived in California their entire lives, were taking jobs away from white workers. As a result, the United States deported (or “repatriated”) thousands of Mexican Americans. Those who stayed did not necessarily receive help from New Deal programs, since **relief benefits** were often unavailable to non-citizens and many Mexican immigrants had never become citizens. Mexican farm workers also found that the New Deal did a better job of assisting factory workers in cities than they did of helping those who worked in the fields. Still, many Anglo and Mexican farm workers joined labor unions in the 1930s and held several **strikes**. Even after the De-

GLOSSARY

relief benefits—money or food given to people who needed them

strikes—work stoppages over disagreements about pay or working conditions

pression ended, when more Mexican workers returned to farm work, wages were low and working and living conditions were very bad for farm workers.

The readings in this lesson will introduce you to the work, conditions, and communities inside the labor camps where both white and Mexican farm workers lived between about 1935 and 1955. These workers lived under very harsh circumstances, but they also developed a number of ways to survive. Each section begins with a question and an introduction. Once you have read these, review the selected primary source and answer the questions that follow.

PART I: WHY DID CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE USE MIGRATORY LABOR?

California produced a large part of the nation's food in the early 1900s. Many growers needed help harvesting their crops, but they did not require a large year-round workforce. Instead, they used temporary workers who were usually paid through a piecework system (that is, by the amount they were able to harvest in a day). In order to have a steady income, many workers had to follow a "circuit" of harvests around the state.

In October 1936, John Steinbeck published *The Harvest Gypsies* as a seven-part story in the *San Francisco News*. The articles showed the conditions of migratory workers in California; Steinbeck estimated that there were at least 150,000 homeless migrants in the state. He used the articles as the basis for his novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*. In the excerpt below, Steinbeck describes the need for migratory laborers and their treatment by the surrounding communities. He also mentions the arrival of a new source of labor for the growers during the 1930s.



Off for the melon fields (Mexican labor). Imperial Valley, California (June 1935).

Credit: Dorothea Lange
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA-OWI
Collection [LC-USF34- 001620-C]



Mexican migrant woman harvesting tomatoes. Santa Clara Valley, California. (November 1938)

Credit: Dorothea Lange.
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA-OWI
Collection [LC-USF34- 018408-E]

Excerpt from *The Harvest Gypsies*:

The unique nature of California agriculture **requires** that these **migrants** exist, and requires that they move about. Peaches and grapes, hops and cotton cannot be harvested by a **resident** population of laborers. For example, a large peach orchard which requires the work of 20 men the year round will need as many as 2000 for the brief time of picking and packing. And if the migration of the 2000 should not occur, if it should be delayed even a week, the crop will rot and be lost.

Thus, in California we find a **curious** attitude toward a group that makes our agriculture successful. The migrants are needed, and they are hated. Arriving in a district they find the dislike always **meted** out by the resident to the foreigner, the outlander. This hatred of the stranger occurs in the whole range of human history, from the most primitive village form to our own highly organized **industrial farming**. The migrants are hated for the following reasons, that they are **ignorant** and dirty people, that they are carriers of disease, that they increase the necessity for police and the tax bill for schooling in a community, and that if they are allowed to organize they can, simply by refusing to work, wipe out the season's crops. They are never received into a community nor into the life of a community. Wanderers in fact, they are never allowed to feel at home in the communities that demand their services....

The drought in the middle west has driven the agricultural populations of Oklahoma, Nebraska and parts of Kansas and Texas westward. Their lands are destroyed and they can never go back to them....

Source: *The Harvest Gypsies* (Berkeley: Heyday, 1988)

GLOSSARY FOR EXCERPT:

requires—in this instance, having a particular result (substitute “means”)

migrant—a person, also described as a temporary worker, who moves regularly to find work, especially in harvesting crops.

resident—someone who lives in a particular area or place for long periods of time

curious—in this instance, strange

meted—given (out)

industrial farming—large-scale farming that uses machines and a big workforce, as opposed to small family farms

ignorant—lack of knowledge about something

1. According to Steinbeck, why were temporary workers (or migrants) needed?
2. Why does Steinbeck say the “migrants are needed, and they are hated”?

PART 2: WHY DID WHITE WORKERS DISPLACE MEXICANS IN THE FIELDS DURING THE 1930S?

In this second excerpt from *The Harvest Gypsies*, Steinbeck reviews the history of California's farm labor. Early in the article, Steinbeck says, "The history of California's importation and treatment of foreign labor is a disgraceful picture of greed and cruelty." He then explains how Chinese and Japanese workers were used in the agricultural fields for many years but were driven out by white workers, immigration laws and violence. He notes that by 1920, there were 80,000 foreign-born Mexicans living in California. They were important farm workers during these years.



Drought refugee families are now mingling with and supplanting Mexican field laborers in the Southwest. Near Chandler, Arizona (May 1937).

Credit: Dorothea Lange
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA-OWI Collection [LC-USF34- 016797-C]

GLOSSARY FOR EXCERPT:

resistance—fight against someone or something

deported—forced return to a country where a person came from

at Government expense—achieved by having the government pay for something

vigilante—an unofficial group of people who join together to punish other groups

savagery—extremely cruel and violent

civilized—well organized and developed socially

repressive—controlled through use of force

thwarted—stopped or prevented

rendered—to cause something to be in a particular state

sufficient—enough

convince—make someone feel certain that something is true

trampled—stepped on heavily so as to crush

repatriating—sending someone back to the country s/he comes from

Excerpt from *The Harvest Gypsies*:

...To the large grower the Mexican labor offered more advantages than simply its cheapness. It could be treated as so much scrap when it was not needed. Any local care for the sick and crippled could be withheld; and in addition, if it offered any **resistance** to the low wage or the terrible living conditions, it could be **deported** to Mexico **at Government expense**.

Recently, led by the example of the workers in Mexico, the Mexicans in California have begun to organize. Their organization in Southern California has been met with **vigilante** terrorism and **savagery** unbelievable in a **civilized** state.

Concerning these **repressive** activities of the large growers, a special commission's report to the National Labor Board has this to say: "Fundamentally, much of the trouble with Mexican labor in the Imperial Valley lies in the natural desire of the workers to organize.

"Their efforts have been **thwarted** or **rendered** ineffective by a well-organized opposition against them. We uncovered **sufficient** evidence to **convince** us that in more than one instance the law was **trampled** under foot by representative citizens of Imperial Valley and by public officials under oath to support the law" ...

...The right of free speech, the right of assembly and the right of jury trial are not extended to Mexicans in the Imperial Valley. This treatment of Mexican labor, together with the deportation of large groups and the plan of the present Mexican government for **repatriating** its nationals, is gradually withdrawing Mexican labor from the fields of California...

Source: *The Harvest Gypsies* (Berkeley: Heyday, 1988)

1. According to Steinbeck, why did large growers want to use Mexican workers in the fields?
2. According to Steinbeck, why did large growers stop using Mexican workers?
3. According to Steinbeck, what happened to Mexican workers who tried to organize labor unions?

PART 3: WHAT KIND OF WORK DID MIGRATORY WORKERS DO? HOW WAS WORK DIVIDED AMONG FAMILY MEMBERS?

Because migratory laborers worked for low wages, families often needed every member, including young children, to work. This

section uses photographs and an excerpt from *The Circuit*, Francisco Jiménez's memoir of his childhood as a migrant worker in the

1940s and 1950s, to review the kinds of work that farm laborers performed.



Children of migratory Mexican field workers. The older one helps tie carrots in the field. Coachella Valley, California (February 1937).

Credit: Dorothea Lange.
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USF34- 016459-E]



The kind of work drought refugees and Mexicans do in the Imperial Valley, California. Planting cantaloupe (1937).

Credit: Dorothea Lange
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USF34- 016114-E]

1. What kind of work are the people in the pictures doing? [be sure to read the captions]

The following excerpt is drawn from Francisco Jiménez's memoir, *The Circuit*. In a chapter entitled "Miracle in Tent City," Jiménez describes how each member of his family contributed to the group's economic well-being.

Please read the following excerpt and answer the questions on the following page.

We called it Tent City. Everybody called it Tent City, although it was neither a city nor a town. It was a farm worker labor camp owned by Sheehey Strawberry Farms.

Tent City had no address; it was simply known as rural Santa Maria. It was on Main Street, about ten miles east of the center of town. A half a mile east of it were hundreds of acres of strawberries cultivated by Japanese sharecroppers and harvested by people from the camp. Behind Tent City was dry wilderness and a mile north of it was the city dump...

Mamá was already expecting when we moved to Tent City from Corcoran at the end of January, after the cotton season was over. By May, when the strawberry harvest started, she was only a few weeks away from giving birth, so she did not join Papá in the fields picking strawberries for Ito. She could not bend over and picking on her knees was too hard on her.

To make ends meet, Mamá cooked for twenty farm workers who lived in Tent City. She made their lunches and had supper ready for them when they returned from picking strawberries at the end of the day. She would get up at four o'clock every morning, seven days a week, to make the tortillas for both meals. On weekends and during the summer, Roberto and I helped her. Once Papá left for work, Roberto rolled the tacos while I wrapped them in wax paper and put them in lunch bags. At eleven thirty, Roberto carried the twenty lunches in a box and delivered them, on foot, to the workers who were given half an hour for lunch. When he returned, he and I washed dishes in a large aluminum tub. We then took care of our younger brother, Trampita, while Mamá took a nap. Around three o'clock she would start cooking dinner, which was served from six to seven. After supper, Roberto and I again cleaned the pots and washed dishes while Mamá fed Trampita. On Saturdays, she did all of the grocery shopping for the week...

Source: Francisco Jiménez, *The Circuit* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), pp.27-28.

1. In the space below, please describe the kind of work that each member of Jiménez's family did and explain why it was important for the family to survive.

	Papá	Mamá	Narrator and Roberto
Kind of Work			
Importance to survival of family			

2. Is Jiménez's description similar to or different from the photographs of farm workers on the previous page? Explain your answer.

In a chapter entitled “Cotton Sack,” Francisco Jiménez describes the kinds of tasks performed by farm workers after World War II.

Please read the excerpt from *The Circuit* and answer the questions that follow.

After driving for about five miles, the *contratista* pulled over to the side of the road and motioned us to park behind him. He got out and pointed to the cotton field. It stretched from the shoulder of the road as far as the eye could see...

The plants were about three feet tall and partially hidden between their dry brown leaves were many cotton bolls. A few smaller plants had yellow and red flowers and green bulbs that looked like small avocados. Papá explained that the flowers would close and form hard green bulbs which, in turn, would open to become cotton bolls. “But remember,” he said firmly, “cotton bolls are like roses. They are pretty but they can hurt you.” “Yes, I know; the shell is like a cat’s claw,” I answered, remembering the numerous scratches I had gotten on my hands and wrists the year before.

After feeling the cotton to make sure it was completely dry, the *contratista* told us to start working. All the pickers, except me, had their own sacks and their own rows to harvest. I went a few yards ahead of Mamá and picked cotton from her row and piled it on the ground. When she reached the pile, she picked it up and put it in her sack. I then moved over to Papá’s row and did the same for him so that he and Mamá could move up their rows evenly. Roberto did not need my help. He was a faster picker than either Papá or Mamá. After picking for two long hours, Roberto helped Mamá make more room in her sack by lifting it upright and shaking it several times up and down, compacting the cotton to the bottom.

When Mamá’s sack was too heavy to drag behind her, Roberto took it to the weigh station to be emptied...As we approached the weigh station, the *contratista* there said to Roberto, “You are really strong for such a little guy. How old are you?”

“Fourteen, almost fifteen,” answered Roberto proudly and out of breath.

“No fooling,” replied the *contratista*, adjusting the scale that hung from a tripod about three feet in front of the cotton trailer. After weighing Mamá’s sack the *contratista* jotted in a notebook ninety pounds after our last name, which he asked Roberto to spell...

At the end of the day, the *contratista* checked his notebook and handed my father eighteen dollars. “Not bad, 600 pounds,” Papá said grinning. “We could have done better if I had my own sack,” I thought to myself.

Source: Francisco Jiménez, *The Circuit* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), pp.66-69.



Mexican seasonal labor contracted for by planters, Mississippi.

Credit: Marion Post Wolcott. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USF33-030560-M1]

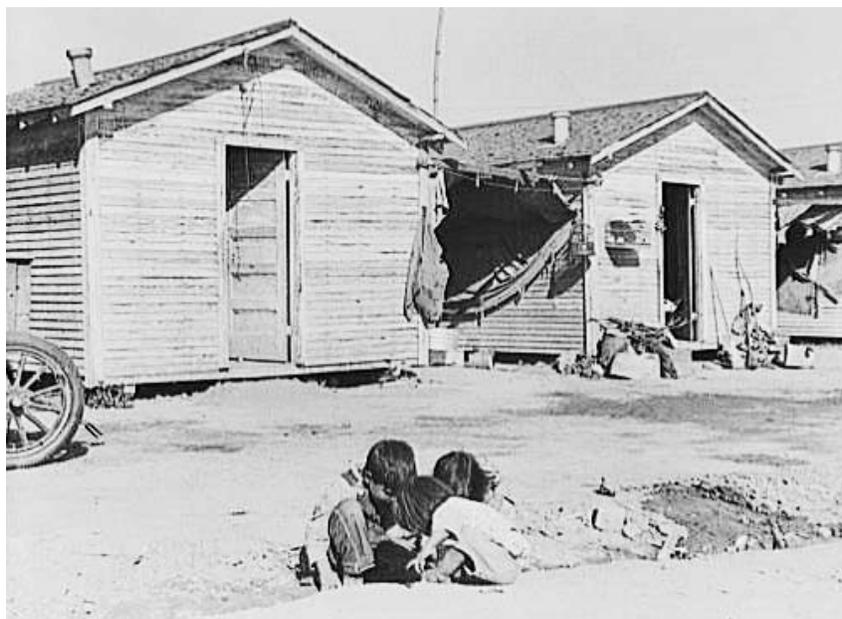
1. Describe how the cotton crop was harvested. Were any machines used for harvesting?
2. How was the family paid for their work? Were they paid by the hour or by the amount of cotton they picked?
3. Why was the young narrator's help in the fields important to the family?

PART 4: WHAT KIND OF LIVING CONDITIONS DID WORKERS EXPERIENCE IN FARM CAMPS?

The next few pages review the conditions of the farm camps where migratory laborers lived.

Please write down 1-2 details that you see in each photograph.

Farm Camp Living Conditions
A.
B.
C.



A. Company housing for cotton workers near Corcoran, California (November 1936).

Credit: Dorothea Lange
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USF34- 009934-C]



B. Migratory Mexican field worker's home on the edge of a frozen pea field. Imperial Valley, California (March 1937)

Credit: Dorothea Lange.
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USF34T01-16425-C]



C. Camp site of striking Mexican workers. Corcoran, California (1933)

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USF344-007487-ZB]

This excerpt from John Steinbeck's *The Harvest Gypsies* describes the living conditions in a California squatters' camp, where many unemployed or migrant workers lived.

The **squatters'** camps are located all over California. Let us see what a typical one is like. It is located on the banks of a river, near an **irrigation** ditch or on a side road where a spring of water is available. From a distance it looks like a city dump, and well it may, for the city dumps are the sources for the material of which it is built. You can see a litter of dirty rags and scrap iron, of houses built of weeds, of flattened cans or of paper. It is only on close approach that it can be seen that these are homes.

Here is a house built by a family who have tried to maintain a neatness. The house is about 10 feet by 10 feet, and it is built completely of corrugated paper. The roof is peaked, the walls are tacked to a wooden frame. The dirt floor is swept clean, and along the irrigation ditch or in the muddy river the wife of the family scrubs clothes without soap and tries to rinse out the mud in muddy water. The spirit of this family is not quite broken, for the children, three of them, still have clothes, and the family possesses three old quilts and a soggy, lumpy mattress. But the money so needed for food cannot be used for soap nor for clothes.

With the first rain the carefully built house will slop down into a brown, pulpy mush; in a few months the clothes will fray off the children's bodies while the lack of nourishing food will subject the whole family to **pneumonia** when the first cold comes.

1. Where are the squatters' camps in California located?

2. What materials do residents use to build their homes?

GLOSSARY:

squatter—one who lives on property without title or payment of rent

irrigation—a system for supplying water to land or crops

pneumonia—a serious disease of the lungs, which makes people have difficulty breathing

In a chapter entitled “Miracle in Tent City,” Francisco Jiménez describes the living conditions at the farm worker labor camp near Santa Maria after World War II.

Even though Mamá was always tired from all the work she did, she made sure everything was ready for the new baby. She asked Papá to seal the base of the tent by piling extra dirt, about six inches high, all around it outside so that animals, especially snakes, could not crawl underneath during the night. When Papá had finished, Mamá pleaded with him to build a floor. He agreed and every evening after he came home from work, he sent Roberto and me to the city dump to look for discarded lumber to build a floor inside our tent.

....we went back [to the dump] several more times until we got enough lumber to complete Mamá's floor. We also found pieces of linoleum and laid them over the wood to cover the holes and the slivers. The different shapes and colors made the floor look like a quilt.

On one of our trips we found a large wooden box that became the crib for the new baby. Mamá took an old green army blanket, tore it in half, and lined the box with it. She made a little pillow with stuffing from an old mattress and cloth from a white flour sack.

Source: Francisco Jiménez, *The Circuit* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), pp.29-30.

1. What changes did Jiménez's family make to their tent?

In a chapter entitled “Christmas Gift,” Jiménez describes strategies the family used to make sure the children had enough food.

2. How does Jiménez's description of his family's tent compare to Steinbeck's description on page 22?

3. What strategy does the family use to add fruits, vegetables, and meat to their diets?

...Sometimes, in the evenings, we went into town in our *Carcachita* to look for food in the trash behind grocery stores. We picked up fruits and vegetables that had been thrown away because they were partly spoiled. Mamá sliced off the rotten parts and made soup with the good vegetable pieces, mixing them with bones she bought at the butcher shop. She made up a story and told the butcher the bones were for the dog. The butcher must have known the bones were for us and not a dog because he left more and more pieces of meat on the bones each time Mamá went back...

Francisco Jiménez, *The Circuit* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), pp. 51-52.

PART 5: WHAT KIND OF CULTURAL AND SOCIAL COMMUNITIES DEVELOPED IN THE LABOR CAMPS?

While work took up a good portion of migratory workers' lives, they nonetheless developed commu-

nities in their labor camps. In this section, you will discuss some of the traditions that Mexican migra-

tory workers observed by reading short excerpts from *The Circuit*.



Tranquillity, California. Sunday morning service. Migrants from the southwest bring their religions with them to California (February 1939).

Credit: Dorothea Lange
Library of Congress Prints and
Photographs Division
[LC-USF34- 018780-E]

Francisco Jiménez, *The Circuit*. In a chapter entitled “Miracle in Tent City,” Jiménez describes how neighbors responded to his infant brother Torito’s sickness.

Papá was about to continue when Doña María, our next door neighbor, interrupted him. “Can I come in?” she asked, poking her head in the entrance to our tent. Doña María was known in Tent City as *la curandera* because she had a gift for curing people using different herbs and chants. She was tall and slender and always wore black dresses that matched the color of her straight, long hair...

“Come in,” Papá answered.

“I’ve been hearing your baby cry,” Doña María continued. “What’s wrong with him?”

“We don’t know,” Mama answered.

“Could it be the evil eye?” asked Doña María, holding the velvet bag in the palm of her left hand. “He is a very handsome child.”

“¿El mal de ojo? No, I think it’s his stomach. It’s as hard as a rock. Feel it,” Papá responded, bringing the kerosene lamp closer to Torito so she could get a better look at him.

Doña María gently rubbed Torito’s stomach with her bony right hand. As soon as she pressed down on it, he groaned and started to cry. She turned him over on his stomach and with her left hand pulled up a fold of skin from his back and then released it. After doing this three times, she flipped him over on his back and asked Mamá to bring her three eggs. She cracked the eggs on his stomach and massaged him gently with them. “The eggs will draw out his sickness,” she said confidently. Torito stopped crying. Mamá seemed relieved, but I was not. There was something about *la curandera* that made me nervous.

Source: Francisco Jiménez, *The Circuit* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), pp.36-37.

1. How did the neighbor try to help Torito recover?
2. How did the various family members respond to the neighbor’s cure?

PART SIX: WRITING ASSIGNMENT

WHAT STRATEGIES DID MEXICAN WORKERS USE TO SURVIVE?

Mexican migratory workers endured many hardships during the 1930s and 1940s. Rather than viewing the workers as victims, however, social historians

have documented the strategies that workers developed to get by. A social historian might use several sources—including photographs, news stories, memoirs, and

oral histories—to write a description of the daily lives of migrant workers.

In this section of the lesson, you will collect the information about workers that you have already discussed into a chart. The first column will tell you where to look for an example (part 3, 4, or 5). In the second column, you should write down an example from one of the sources. In the third column, you should write down why you think your example was important or significant. The first example has been completed for you. After you finish the chart, you will fill your answers in to a paragraph.

1. What is the **historical context** of this lesson? That is, where is it happening and when? Write below.

2. What was the **economic context**? This graphic organizer will help you think about economic context.

Location	Example	Significance
Housework/chores (Part 3)	1. Photograph of children by Dorothea Lange 2. The mother and children's work in The Circuit	1. The photograph shows how even young children helped their parents by watching their siblings and by performing simple tasks in the fields such as tying carrots. 2. The mother and children's work in The Circuit shows how families used household work such as cooking as a way to earn extra money. Children were expected to help.
Jobs (Part 3)		

2. What was the **social context**? This graphic organizer will help you think about social context.

Location	Example	Significance
Living Conditions (part 4)— recycling, finding materials, etc.		
Reliance on family (part 3,4)— cooperation among family members		
Community (part 5)— ways people helped each other		
Cultural traditions (part 5)— religious or cultural practices		

2. Now that you have outlined the importance of your primary sources, please complete the following paragraph. You will need to use complete sentences. Explain your ideas fully. When you are finished, you may be asked to read your paragraph to the rest of your group.

During _____, Mexican
[historical context—time—question 1]

agricultural workers in _____
[place—question 1]

lived through many hardships, but they also developed many strategies to survive. During the 1920s, Mexican workers became an important labor force for California's farms. Living and working conditions on the farms worsened in the 1930s, when white Dust Bowl migrants arrived in California. Wages began to fall. Economically, Mexican migrant workers needed every family member to earn money. For example, _____

_____. Besides jobs and chores, workers developed
[example of housework and chores—question 2]

other strategies to improve their living conditions. For example, _____

_____. This was important because
[example of living conditions —question 3]

Socially, members of the migrant communities relied on each other. For example,

_____.
[another example of family and community—question 3]

Family and community was important because _____
[explain significance]

_____. Finally, workers relied on cultural traditions such as _____

_____, which was important because
[example of cultural tradition—question3]

_____.
[explain significance]

In this way, workers relied on economic, social, and cultural traditions to survive the difficult times in the camps during the 1930s and 1940s.

How did perceptions of Mexican American agricultural workers change in the United States during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s? Why were Mexican Americans deported during the 1930s and 1950s?

INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS

The previous lesson examined the living and working conditions of migratory workers during the 1930s and 1940s. This lesson focuses on how the United States government and outlying communities treated Mexican migratory workers. As an excerpt from Steinbeck's *Harvest Gypsies* in the last lesson indicated, the communities that surrounded agricultural areas often resented migratory workers. During the Depression, resentment against both Mexican migratory workers and Dust Bowl refugees intensified. White Californians claimed that these groups were taking jobs away from "native" workers or were draining precious resources from government coffers by receiving unemployment benefits. These claims were not necessarily true; as historians Francisco Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez note, Mexican families constituted about 10 percent of families who received county aid in Los Angeles. Nevertheless, as the Depression deepened, state and local governments passed laws that required employers to hire native-born or naturalized citizens, and county welfare officials granted only \$20/month to Mexican families in comparison to the \$30 given to Anglo families.

The Immigration service sought to resolve the situation by deporting Mexican workers. In 1930, over three million Mexicans lived in the American Southwest. While many of them had lived in the United States for years, some had never bothered to apply for citizenship. Between 1930 and 1939, Mexicans comprised 46.3 percent of all people deported from the United States, yet Mexicans comprised less than one percent of the United States population. The efforts were particularly intense during the early years of the Depression. Immigration agents conducted raids in Southern California in 1931. Thousands of Mexicans were subsequently repatriated by bus, train, ship, and aircraft. Historians Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez estimate that approximately one million Mexicans were deported during the 1920s and 1930s at a cost of millions of dollars to both governments.

When the United States entered World War II in 1941, many farms experienced labor shortages as white workers entered the armed services or obtained better-paying defense industry jobs. To ease the labor shortage, the United States and Mexico established the *bracero* program in which Mexican workers were allowed to enter the United States on a temporary basis to work on contract for American farmers. After World War II, migrants from Mexico continued to arrive in California to find work in the state's agri-

STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS LESSON

Skills

■ Chronological and Spatial thinking

- Students use a variety of maps and documents to interpret human movement, including major patterns of domestic and international migration, changing environmental preferences and settlement patterns, the frictions that develop between population groups, and the diffusion of ideas, technological innovations, and goods.

■ Historical Interpretation

- Students show the connections, causal and otherwise, between particular historical events and larger social, economic, and political trends and developments.
- Students interpret past events and issues within the context in which an event unfolded rather than solely in terms of present-day norms and values.

Content standards

- **11.6. Students analyze the different explanations for the Great Depression and how the New Deal**

fundamentally changed the role of the federal government.

- 11.6.3. Discuss the human toll of the Depression, natural disasters, and unwise agricultural practices and their effects on the depopulation of rural regions and on political movements of the left and right, with particular attention to the Dust Bowl refugees and their social and economic impacts in California.
- 11.6.5. Trace the advances and retreats of organized labor, from the creation of the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations to current issues of a postindustrial, multinational economy, including the United Farm Workers in California.
- **11.8. Students analyze the economic boom and social transformation of post-World War II America.**
 - 11.8.2. Describe the significance of Mexican immigration and its relationship to the agricultural economy, especially in California.
- **11.9. Students analyze U.S. foreign policy since World War II.**
 - 11.9.7. Examine relations between the United States and Mexico in the twentieth century, including key economic, political, immigration, and environmental issues.

cultural fields. Some arrived via the *bracero* program; others, like the family of Francisco Jiménez, crossed the border illegally. Both groups found work in the state's agriculture fields. During these years, the federal government resumed its aggressive deportation campaign aimed at illegal Mexican migrants.

This lesson includes several accounts of deportations over a twenty five-year period: an article from the *Los Angeles Times* in 1931, a song written by folksinger Woody Guthrie in 1948, and Francisco Jiménez's account of his family's deportation in the 1950s. There is also an excerpt from Francisco Jiménez's memoir about the treatment of Gabriel, a *bracero* with whom he worked in the agricultural fields.

Lesson Goals

In addition to touching on several content standards, this lesson will help students understand some of the consequences of Americans' desperation for jobs during the 1930s, which meets the criteria for Chronological and Spatial Thinking: "Students use a variety of maps and documents to interpret human movement, including major patterns of domestic and international migration [and] the frictions that develop between population groups...". Since it covers a twenty-five year period, the lesson will also help students see the general connection between deportations of illegal immigrants and the American economic situation: that is, during difficult economic times, more deportations seem to occur. Finally, the lesson asks students to synthesize deportations from three different points of view: a "third person" newspaper article, a folk song that employs multiple points of view as it tries to empathize with deportees, and a first-person memoir written by a deportee.

Discussion Guide for Teachers

Format: Small or large-group discussion. Reading may be assigned in advance for class discussion.

This lesson introduces students to the political and cultural context of Mexican repatriation and deportations during both the 1930s and 1950s. Students examine several documents that discuss Mexican immigrants in California during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Each document offers a different perspective on Mexican immigrants, reflecting American society's ambivalence about the immigrants. See the introduction to this lesson for information on specific policy changes.

The first document is a front-page article about Mexican repatriation from the *Los Angeles Times* in April 1931. Teachers should draw students' attention to the words used to describe the repatriates; while some phrases (e.g., "piteous scenes were enacted") elicit sympathy from readers, other phrases suggest that the Mexicans belong on their "native soil." Teachers may want to discuss what

the use of words such as “horde” or “shipments” connotes about the Mexicans. During the 1940s, when white workers began to join the armed forces, American attitudes toward Mexican farm laborers shifted to one of sympathy and friendship. These attitudes are evident in the photographs of Mexican workers taken in 1942, which praise workers for being “Good Neighbors” who aided the cotton crop harvest.

Within the year, the American and Mexican governments had created the *bracero* program to bring Mexican farm workers into the United States on temporary contracts. Teachers will want to prepare students for this section by explaining the *bracero* program before assigning the reading. The excerpt about the *bracero* program in this lesson is about the postwar period, when both *braceros* and illegal immigrants labored in California’s agricultural fields. If teachers wish to delve into the program more deeply, there is a *bracero* film created by the Council of California Growers at the Prelinger Archives (<http://www.archive.org/details/prelinger>). The film, entitled “Why Braceros?” and produced circa 1959, shows how agribusiness and large farmers tried to justify the *bracero* program to the American public in its later years of existence. If desired, teachers could show a piece of this film and ask students to compare it to the excerpts from Francisco Jiménez’s memoir, *The Circuit* as well as Woody Guthrie’s song, “Deportee.” While the film shows the perspective of growers, Jiménez and Guthrie attempt to show the perspective of *braceros* and/or illegal farm workers. In an excerpt from the chapter “Learning the Game,” Jiménez recounts the story of Gabriel, a *bracero* who refused to pull a plow in a field. Guthrie, who made his name by documenting the experiences of his fellow Dust Bowl refugees during the 1930s, uses multiple points of view to condemn the treatment of the “deportees.” In the final excerpt, Jiménez recounts the sad tale of his own deportation just before he was to recite the beginning of the Declaration of Independence in his Social Studies class.

Total Assessment for Lesson 7 and Lesson 8: Poster Project

On the next two pages is an optional assignment designed around Lessons 7 and 8. Students might also use materials covered in Lessons 2 and 3. Below are some instructions that could be given to students, although teachers will need to fill in details.

KEY TERMS

Bracero—in Spanish, literally, “arm.” A Mexican laborer brought into the United States between 1942 and the early 1960s to work under contract as a farm laborer. *Braceros* were required to leave the United States when their contract expired.

Repatriation—a return to one’s country of origin or citizenship. Thousands of Mexican immigrants were repatriated during the Depression. The federal government’s program included both voluntary and forced repatriation, but the lines between the two were not always clear.

TIME REQUIRED

- If students complete reading in advance, discussion should take about one class period. A poster project would require additional classroom time.

MATERIALS

- Copies of reading material. If teacher opts to assign the poster project, students will need art supplies.

GROUP PROJECT INSTRUCTIONS FOR STUDENTS

During the past several lessons, we have examined the condition of Mexican migratory workers between the 1930s and 1950s. We have talked about the kinds of work that agricultural workers undertook as well as the living conditions in the camps, including the traditions kept by both community and family members. We have also

read about the deportations of Mexican agricultural workers during the 1930s and 1940s.

To show your knowledge of this topic, you will create a poster project on the theme of migratory workers in California between the 1930s and 1950s. Your project can take many forms: among other things, you may write a song or a

poem, design a mural or illustration, write a letter, or create a list of reforms that might have been enacted to help migratory workers. You and the other members of your group should decide what themes you would like to address, but you may then decide to divide up the work within your group.

Guidelines:

- 1. Theme.** With the other members of your group, think about some of the themes that have developed during the past few lessons and write them down below. Themes might include—but are not limited to—deportations and racism, Depression-era working conditions, or life on the harvest circuit. Which theme or themes are the most important to you?

Theme	Example

- 2. Format.** Look through the materials we have covered in the past few lessons. You'll see examples of murals, songs/poems, letters, short stories, and journalistic accounts of migrant camps. Which sources do you think were effective?
- 3. Project.** Every member of your group will make a contribution to the project, which you will assemble during the beginning of the next class. Here are some of the things you might want to create:
- Mural/illustrations. An illustration should help the viewer understand the living and working conditions of migratory workers. For example, you could create a mural or illustration of one of the excerpts from *The Circuit*.
 - Poem(s) and/or song(s). Review the Woody Guthrie song. You might think about writing a poem/song from the perspective of a worker on *The Circuit* or from one of the photographs you looked at in an earlier workshop.
 - Seven questions that you would ask Francisco Jiménez about his life if you were interviewing him for the school newspaper.
 - Paragraph that describes the conditions of migratory workers in the camps described by Jiménez (model after Steinbeck's *Harvest Gypsies*).
 - A list of 4-5 reforms/laws that could have been enacted to help migratory workers and/or the *braceros*.
 - If you have a different idea, feel free to present it to your teacher.

How did perceptions of Mexican American agricultural workers change in the United States during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s? Why were Mexican Americans deported during the 1930s and 1950s?

INTRODUCTION FOR STUDENTS

This lesson shows how the United States government and local communities treated Mexican migratory workers during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. During the Depression, resentment against both Mexican migratory workers and Dust Bowl refugees was strong. White Californians believed that these groups were either taking jobs away from “native” workers or were draining money from government programs. These claims were not necessarily true, but as the Depression continued, state and local governments passed laws that required employers to hire only citizens and gave fewer government benefits to Mexican families. Mexican workers were also deported. Historians Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez estimate that approximately one million Mexicans were deported during the 1920s and 1930s.

When the United States entered World War II in 1941, many of the farms experienced labor shortages as

white workers entered the armed services or took high-paying defense industry jobs. To ease the labor shortage, the United States and Mexico established the *bracero* program in which Mexican workers were allowed to enter the United States on a temporary basis to work for American farmers. After World War II, migrants from Mexico continued to arrive in California to find work in the state’s agricultural fields. Some arrived via the *bracero* program; others, like the family of Francisco Jiménez, crossed the border illegally. Both groups found work in the state’s agriculture fields. During these years, the federal government once again deported thousands of illegal Mexican migrants.



Pickets on the highway calling workers from the fields, 1933 cotton strike.

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection, [LC-USF344-007484-ZB]

In this lesson, you will read several accounts of deportations: an article from the *Los Angeles Times* in 1931, a song written by folksinger Woody Guthrie in 1948, and Francisco Jiménez’s account of his family’s deportation in the 1950s. The lesson also includes documents showing Mexican workers who were brought into the United States under the *bracero* program. By reading and comparing the sources, you will see how Americans’ opinions of Mexican workers shifted between the 1930s and the 1950s.

DEPORTATIONS DURING THE 1930S

Please examine the photographs and read the accompanying headlines, captions, and story from the front page of the Los Angeles Times in April 1931. Circle or underline any words or sentences you think are significant.

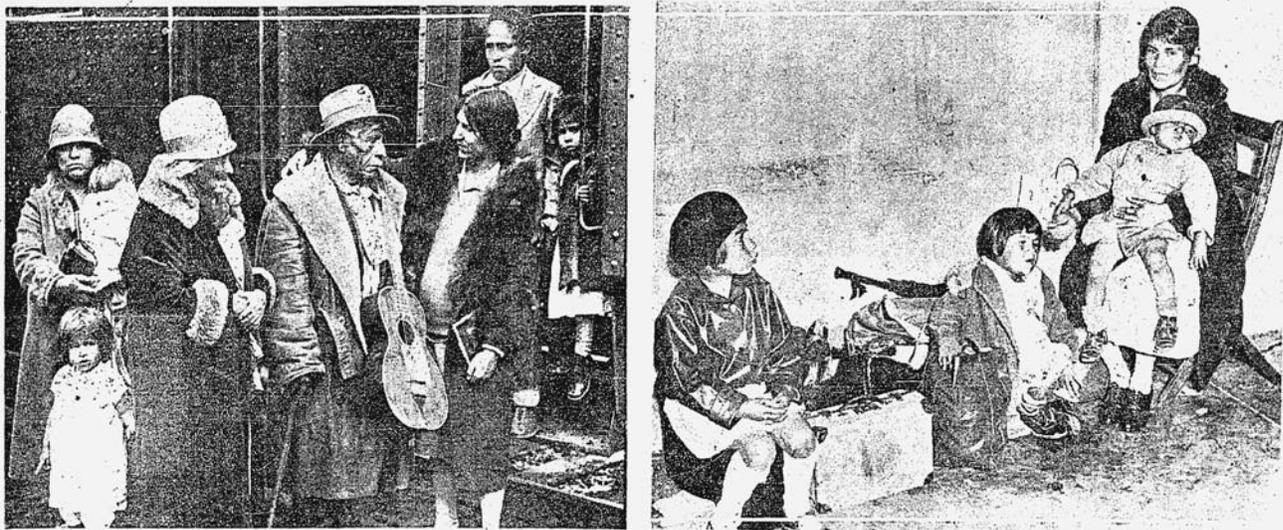
D. SOUTHERN
ers today and
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Los Angeles Times

In Two
PART 1

MONDAY, APRIL 24, 1931. CITY NEWS—EDITORIAL

Mexicans and Families About to Embark on Trek Back to Native Land



They Take Few Belongings

Photographs of sad-faced group of Mexicans at Central Station yesterday preparing to leave the United States for their native land.

“HORDE DEPARTS FOR NATIVE SOIL”

One of the largest single groups of Mexican repatriates ever to leave in the vast migration back to Mexico—1150 men, women and children—departed yesterday on two sections of the Southern Pacific’s Sunset Limited, bound for Nogales and El Paso, from which points they will be distributed inland in the southern republic.

Arrangements are being made through Consul-General De la Colina and Dr.

Alejandro Wallace, head of the Mexican relief organization, to send away another 1000 early next week. Other shipments are planned weekly thereafter....

....Piteous scenes were enacted at the station as the members of the group prepared to leave. Tears flowed freely among the adults and small boys who had been born in the United States were bewildered by the sudden turn of events which uproot their lives here and

transfer them to another soil.

Possessions among the travelers were scant. One elderly man hugged to his breast his only material wealth—a much-used guitar. Another solicitously carried a caged songbird, which chirped cheerlessly in the chill rainy morning. A little boy and girl—grasping each other’s chubby hand held firmly to their English school books, and many mothers held small

babes in their arms.

The Mexicans are estimated to be leaving Southern California at approximately 10,000 a month. Many that do not go by rail are returning in automobiles. Others are sacrificing their meager savings to pay their fares.

First of two principal reasons for the exodus, Mexican colony leaders say, is that they are unable to obtain work to earn suf-

ficient money to sustain themselves and their families under present economic difficulties, and they feel they may fare better near friends and relatives in their native land.

The Mexicans also have become fear-ridden at renewed activity of immigration officials, which they have misinterpreted as a wholesale deportation campaign directed against their nationality. Immigration

authorities, however, deny a campaign against any single nationality and assert they are interested only in those subject to deportation under the law.

The trainloads are being financed by the local Mexican relief organization and the consular office, aided by the county welfare department operating through County Auditor Payne's office which defrays a portion of the expense.

Questions about the *Los Angeles Times* story

1. Do newspapers have a bias, or do they simply report facts?
2. Briefly summarize the story. According to the article, how many Mexicans are leaving the state per month? Why are they leaving—is it voluntary or coerced, and is there any disagreement about the reasons for departure?
3. What words or phrases does the paper use to describe the departing Mexicans? How might these words or phrases elicit sympathy or disdain for the departing Mexicans?
4. What assumption does the paper make about the repatriates when it states that they are departing “for their native soil”?

MEXICAN WORKERS DURING WORLD WAR II

The photographs on this page were taken in 1942, after the United States had entered World War II but before the *bracero* program had started.

Please examine the photographs and accompanying text and answer the questions at the bottom of the page.



Agricultural. Mexican cotton pickers. Because of the nation's manpower shortage, which threatened the United States' summer cotton crops, Mexican workers were recently asked to assist farmers near Corpus Christi, Texas, during the cotton harvest season. (Nov. 1942).

Credit: Howard R. Hollem
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division,
FSA-OWI Collection [LC-USE6- D-007281]



Agricultural. Mexican cotton pickers. Surrounded by the soft white cotton blossoms whose harvesting is essential to America's war effort, this Mexican girl takes a moment's rest from her strenuous picking job. She's one of hundreds of Good Neighbors who gave a helping hand to the farmers near Corpus Christi, Texas, by harvesting the summer cotton crop. (Nov. 1942).

Credit: Howard R. Hollem
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division,
FSA-OWI Collection [LC-USE6- D-007285]

1. According to the text accompanying the photographs, why did the farm owners need Mexican workers to pick cotton? Why do you suppose there was a labor shortage?
2. How does the accompanying text portray the Mexican workers? Write down 1-2 words that are used to describe the workers and explain why the descriptions are significant.
3. Explain how the descriptions are similar or different to those in the *Los Angeles Times* article on the previous page. What changed between 1931, when the *Times* article appeared, and 1942, when these photographs were taken?

BRACEROS

In a chapter entitled “Learning the Game,” Francisco Jiménez describes Gabriel, a *bracero* who worked at a nearby farm.

One Sunday, near the end of the strawberry season, Ito sent me to work for a sharecropper who was sick and needed extra help that day. His field was next to Ito’s. Gabriel was loaned out to the same farmer. As soon as I arrived, the *contratista* began giving me orders. “Listen, *hüerquito*, I want you to hoe weeds. But first, give me and Gabriel a hand,” he said. Gabriel and I climbed on to the bed of the truck and helped him unload a plow. The *contratista* tied one end of a thick rope to it and, handing the other end to Gabriel, said, “Here, tie this around your waist. I want you to till the furrows.”

“I can’t do that,” Gabriel said with a painful look in his face.

“What do you mean you can’t?” responded the *contratista*, placing his hands on his hips.

“In my country, oxen pull plows, not men,” Gabriel replied, tilting his hat back. “I am not an animal.”

The *contratista* walked up to Gabriel and yelled in his face, “Well this isn’t your country, idiot! You either do what I say or I’ll have you fired!”

“Don’t do that, please,” Gabriel said. “I have a family to feed.”

“I don’t give a damn about your family!” the *contratista* replied, grabbing Gabriel by the shirt collar and pushing him. Gabriel lost his balance and fell backwards. As he hit the ground, the *contratista* kicked him in the side with the tip of his boot. Gabriel sprung up and, with both hands clenched, lunged at the *contratista*. White as a ghost, Díaz quickly jumped back. “Don’t be stupid...your family,” he stammered. Gabriel held back. His face was flushed with rage. Without taking his eyes off Gabriel, the *contratista* slid into his truck and sped off, leaving us in a cloud of dust.

I felt scared. I had not seen men fight before. My mouth felt dry and my hands and legs began to shake. Gabriel threw his hat on the ground and said angrily, “That Díaz is a coward. He thinks he’s a big man because he runs a *bracero* camp for the growers. He’s nothing but a leech! And now he tries to treat me like an animal. I’ve had it.” Then, picking up his hat and putting it on, he added, “He can cheat me out of my money. He can fire me. But he can’t force me do what isn’t right. He can’t take away my dignity. That he can’t do!”

Source: Francisco Jiménez, *The Circuit* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), pp.90-92.



**Arrival of the first
braceros (c.1942)**

Credit: Dorothea Lange
Oakland Museum of
California

1. What did Gabriel refuse to do, and why did he refuse?
2. What did the contratista mean when he told Gabriel, "...this isn't your country, idiot! You either do what I say or I'll have you fired!"?
3. What do you think happened to Gabriel as a result of his confrontation with Díaz?

POST-WAR DEPORTATIONS: WOODY GUTHRIE

In 1948, Woody Guthrie, the folksinger who wrote songs about the Dust Bowl refugees during the 1930s,

heard a radio report about a group of Mexican deportees who had died in a plane crash. Guthrie was shocked

that the report did not mention their names, and he wrote the following song to commemorate the workers.

DEPORTEE (PLANE WRECK AT LOS GATOS) Woody Guthrie, 1948

The crops are all in and the peaches are rott'ning,
The oranges piled in their creosote dumps.
You're flying 'em back to the Mexican border,
To pay all their money to wade back again.

CHORUS:

Goodbye to my Juan, goodbye, Rosalita,
Adios mis amigos, Jesus y Maria;
You won't have your names when you ride the big airplane,
All they will call you will be "deportees"

My father's own father, he waded that river,
They took all the money he made in his life;
My brothers and sisters come working the fruit trees,
And they rode the truck till they took down and died.

Some of us are illegal, and some are not wanted,
Our work contract's out and we have to move on;
Six hundred miles to that Mexican border,
They chase us like outlaws, like rustlers, like thieves.

We died in your hills, we died in your deserts,
We died in your valleys and died on your plains.
We died 'neath your trees and we died in your bushes,
Both sides of the river, we died just the same.

The sky plane caught fire over Los Gatos Canyon,
A fireball of lightning, and shook all our hills,
Who are all these friends, all scattered like dry leaves?
The radio says, "They are just deportees"

Is this the best way we can grow our big orchards?
Is this the best way we can grow our good fruit?
To fall like dry leaves to rot on my topsoil
And be called by no name except "deportees"?

Read the words to the song, and circle or underline any words or phrases that you find significant.

Plane Wreck at Los Gatos

Words by Woody Guthrie;
Music by Martin Hoffman
TRO-© Copyright 1961
(Renewed)
1963 (Renewed) Ludlow Music,
Inc., New York, N.Y.

1. Briefly summarize each stanza, including the chorus.

Stanza 1:
Chorus:
Stanza 2:
Stanza 3:
Stanza 4:
Stanza 5:
Stanza 6:

3. What devices does Guthrie use to make listeners (or readers) sympathize with the victims of the plane crash? [**Hint:** point to a passage that you found moving. Is there a word or image that Guthrie used that made the story more compelling?]
4. In this song, Guthrie uses first person (“we”) second person (“you”), and third person (“they”) at different times. Is he always referring to same group of people during the song? Explain the perspectives (points of view) that Guthrie may be using.
5. The final stanza of the song asks a series of questions. To whom are these questions posed?
6. How do Guthrie’s sympathies compare to the portrayal of Mexican workers in the World War II photographs and/or in the *Los Angeles Times* article? Make at least two comparisons.

“MOVING STILL”: FRANCISCO JIMÉNEZ

In the final chapter of *The Circuit*, Francisco Jiménez describes his family's deportation from the Unit-

ed States during the 1950s. Jiménez's account can be compared to the other accounts of deportations

that you have read: the *Los Angeles Times* article from 1931 as well as the Woody Guthrie song.

At the beginning of the story, Jiménez's family has a near run-in with the border patrol (*la migra*). Francisco, the narrator, is also an eighth grader who is memorizing the beginning of the Declaration of Independence for eighth-grade history.

At one o'clock, right after lunch, I was the first one in Miss Ehlis' classroom. I sat at my desk and went over the recitation in my mind one last time: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness..." I checked the text in my note pad to make sure I had not forgotten anything. It was perfect. Feeling confident, I placed the note pad inside the desk and waited for class to start.

After the bell rang and everyone was seated, Miss Ehlis began to take roll. She was interrupted by a knock at the door. When she opened it, I could see Mr. Denevi, the principal, and a man standing behind him. The instant I saw the green uniform, I panicked. I began to tremble and could feel my heart pounding against my chest as though it wanted to escape too. Miss Ehlis and the immigration officer walked up to me. Putting her right hand on my shoulder and looking up at the officer, she said sadly, "This is him." My eyes clouded. I stood up and followed the immigration officer out of the classroom and into his car marked "Border Patrol." I sat in the front seat as the officer drove down Broadway to Santa Maria High School to pick up Roberto.

Source: Francisco Jiménez, *The Circuit* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), pp. 133-134.

Questions about Jiménez's excerpt:

1. Please summarize the excerpt.
2. Why is it significant that the Border Patrol arrived just as Jiménez was about to recite the Declaration of Independence? What is the author trying to say about deportation? Is there anything hopeful about this short story?
3. You have read several different primary sources that describe deportations: the *Los Angeles Times* article from 1931, the Woody Guthrie song from 1948, and Jiménez's short story. How is Jiménez's account similar to or different from the others? What perspective does Jiménez offer that the other accounts do not have? Write 4-5 sentences in which you compare the sources.

The New Deal: How did working-class ideas influence American culture in the 1930s?

STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS WORKSHOP

Skills

■ Chronological and Spatial thinking

- Students analyze how change happens at different rates at different times; understand that some aspects can change while others remain the same; and understand that change is complicated and affects not only technology and politics but also values and beliefs.

■ Historical Interpretation

- Students show the connections, causal and otherwise, between particular historical events and larger social, economic, and political trends and developments.
- Students interpret past events and issues within the context in which an event unfolded rather than solely in terms of present-day norms and values.

Content standards

■ 11.6. Students analyze the different explanations for the Great Depression and how the New Deal fundamentally changed the role of the federal government.

- 11.6.4. Analyze the effects of and the controversies

INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS

The Great Depression was the first major crisis of the new industrial economy. Previous lessons documented the suffering that resulted from the Depression as well as the actions that the government took to repair the economy, and what impact these actions had on American culture in the 1930s. This lesson will show how working-class life influenced the New Deal and American culture during the 1930s.

During the 1920s, American culture celebrated businessmen like Henry Ford. The culture embraced an ethos that celebrated the buying power of consumers, the triumph of entrepreneurship, and the pursuit of wealth. When the economy failed, however, the industrial geniuses of the 1920s looked a lot less heroic, and it appeared that if capitalism even survived the 1930s, it would do so only in a dramatically altered fashion. American culture during the Depression reflected this change in fortune. As historian Michael Denning explains in *The Cultural Front*, average workers (and unions) became the heroes of the culture, which often depicted (and celebrated) concepts such as “labor” and “toil” rather than “innovation.” Of course, it should be noted that Americans continued to enjoy escapist films like “Gold Diggers of 1933” and continued to buy consumer goods.

Lesson Goals

By examining sources such as posters, murals, fiction, and folk songs, students will try to understand the impact of working-class culture on American society during the Depression. What values did the culture of the New Deal celebrate? What kinds of values were considered important, and what kind of people held these values? How do these values contrast to previous eras? To the present day?

At the end of this lesson, teachers should ask students to think about what they would document about life in their area today. Given the opportunity, what kind of cultural projects would they support in their community?

Discussion Guide for Teachers

Format: There are a number of different ways to teach this material. Teachers may wish to lead a group discussion. With the exception of audio for Guthrie’s songs, every source in this workshop source is available online, so teachers with online access can project the primary sources onto a screen for students to observe. The Guthrie lyrics and excerpts from *The Grapes of Wrath* could also be assigned as reading in preparation for a group discussion (teachers could excerpt the novel at slightly greater length, or they can shorten the section excerpted here). Teachers could also divide the class into small groups or pairs and assign different pieces of the lesson to the groups. Students could then summarize their findings—and, if applicable, their “Federal One” project—at the end of class. The final exercise could be shortened to a discussion question.

Lesson 9 looks at three different cultural forms from the Depression era: public art, fiction, and folk music. In the first part of the lesson, students will examine the public art created by the Federal One Program, which was part of the WPA. FDR established the WPA in 1935 to put unemployed Americans to work on projects that would benefit the public good. For the most part, the WPA undertook construction projects: laborers built bridges, roads, parks, and airports all over the United States. Under the “Federal One” program, the WPA also paid unemployed artists and writers to undertake cultural projects for the public benefit. These cultural workers, in turn, created projects that documented—and celebrated—the everyday lives of average Americans.

In the second half of the lesson, students will read brief excerpts from John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* and, if possible, read and listen to Woody Guthrie’s song “I Ain’t Got No Home.” Historian Michael Denning writes that *The Grapes of Wrath* is “one of the most striking examples of a *Popular Front* narrative becoming part of American mass culture” due in large part to its emphasis on the theme of exodus. Denning actually argues that there are better exemplars of key concepts of the *Popular Front* than Steinbeck’s novel, which was popular as a film and novel in 1939 and 1940. Students will examine two of these exemplars in the final section of the lesson when they listen to some of Guthrie’s work from the *Dust Bowl Ballads* (1938). Guthrie, who was born in Oklahoma and migrated to California during the mid-1930s, frequently performed at migrant camps and picket lines. Michael Denning notes that while the song “I Ain’t Got No Home” was drawn from a popular Baptist hymn, Guthrie “took this hymn out of resignation and other worldly redemption and turned it inside out” by singing it from the perspective of a dispossessed migrant worker. The final line of the hymn remains the same (see *The Popular Front*, pp. 271-272). Students should note how Guthrie’s songs identify with the common worker as well as how Guthrie eschews the term “Okie.”

Teachers should prompt their students to observe the limits of working-class culture. One such limit is how these examples of

arising from New Deal economic policies and the expanded role of the federal government in society and the economy since the 1930s.

- 11.6.5. Trace the advances and retreats of organized labor, from the creation of the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations to current issues of a postindustrial, multinational economy, including the United Farm Workers in California.

KEY TERMS

Popular Front—the

Communist Party's cooperation with the noncommunist liberal left as an effort to combat fascism. The Popular Front made an effort to appeal to a wide audience through popular culture. It ended in 1939, when the Soviet Union agreed to a non-aggression pact with Germany.

Socialism—a system in which the state (government) owns and controls the production and distribution of goods. Many conservatives argued that the New Deal programs would bring socialism to the USA.

TIME REQUIRED

- At least one hour using a shortened selection of materials.

MATERIALS

- Photocopies of selected materials.

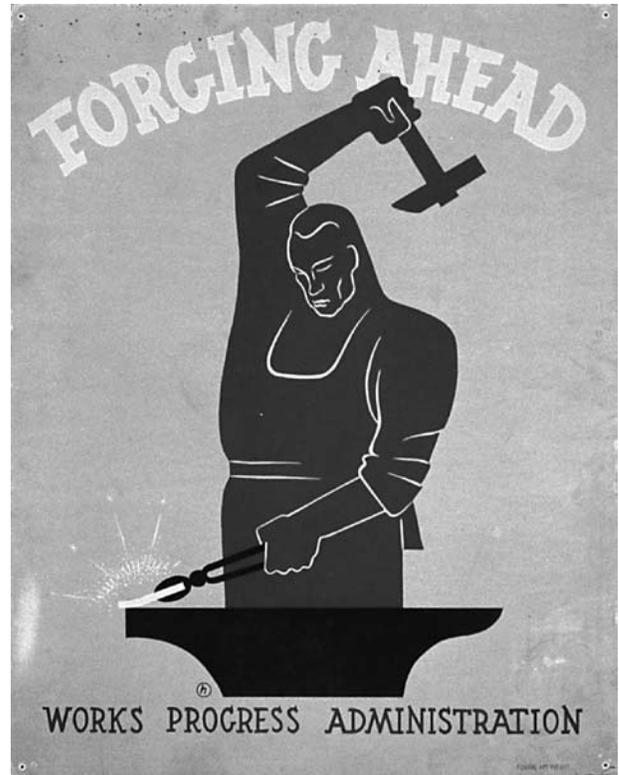
working-class unity do not necessarily embrace racial unity. For example, Steinbeck's tale of the white Dust Bowl refugees ignores the consequences of the Depression for Mexican farm laborers, who were repatriated when white Americans accused them of being a burden to taxpayers (for more information on repatriation, see Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez's *Decade of Betrayal*). The white migrants (estimated at 350,000) quickly filled the agricultural jobs formerly held by Mexican workers. Teachers should note that the culture celebrated—or attempted to rehabilitate—the concept of masculinity by celebrating white working men, though San Francisco's Coit Tower murals and Diego Rivera's *Detroit Industry* mural offer notable exceptions of art that depicts racial cooperation. The culture also did not necessarily challenge conventional ideas about gender roles.

If teachers wish to give their students an example of a figure who appealed to both blacks and whites, they might wish to mention the African American boxer Joe Louis, who became a source of American pride when he met German boxer Max Schmeling on the eve of World War II. Many popular music songs celebrated Louis; there is a collection from Rounder Records, "Joe Louis: An American Hero." A segment of the WGBH documentary "The Great Depression" also discusses Joe Louis' importance to the African-American community during the 1930s.

The New Deal: How did working-class ideas influence American Culture in the 1930s?

INTRODUCTION FOR STUDENTS

In today's lesson, you will look at primary sources such as posters, murals, fiction, and folk songs and will discuss how working-class Americans influenced American society during the Depression. During the 1920s, American culture celebrated businessmen like Henry Ford rather than the people who worked in his factories. When the Depression occurred, however, the factory owners of the 1920s looked a lot less heroic. American culture during the Depression reflected this change in fortune. During the 1930s, average workers (and unions) became the heroes of the culture, which often depicted (and celebrated) concepts such as "labor" and "hard work" rather than "innovation." As you read the primary sources in the following pages, think about whose values were represented in the popular culture and why this shift may have been significant.



A poster of a blacksmith designed by Harry Herzog for the Works Progress Administration.

Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, WPA Poster Collection [LC-USZC2-1116 DLC]

THE FEDERAL ARTS PROJECT



Established in 1935, the Federal Arts Project offered free art lessons to people in local communities, creating posters that encouraged Americans to work. The Arts project made posters for many of the job programs established by the federal government. The project also commissioned murals for public buildings; these examples of "public art" frequently depicted events in local history.

WPA poster design on blue background (left).

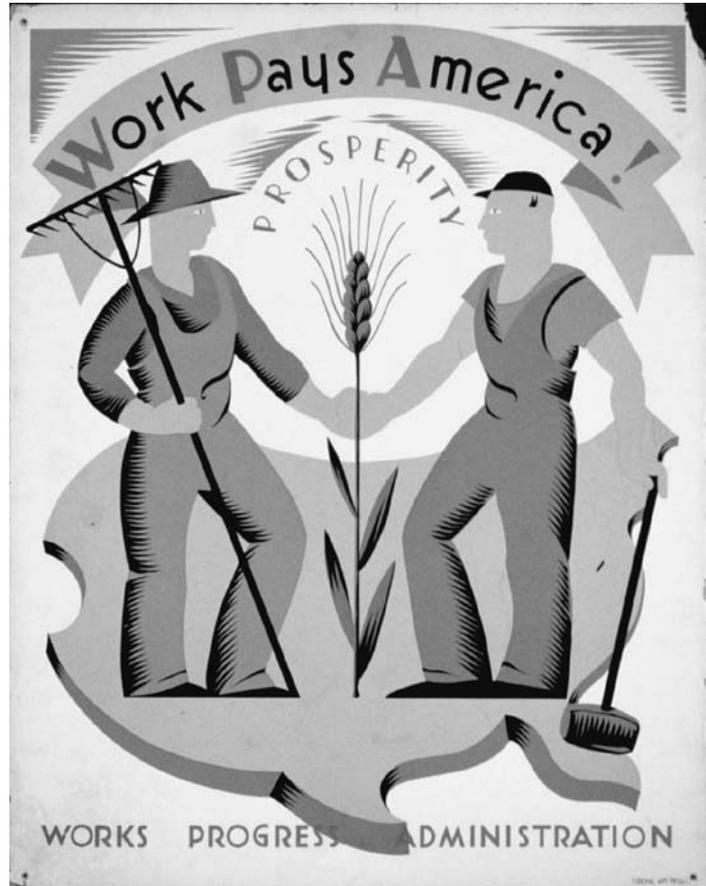
Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, WPA Poster Collection [LCUSZC2-5357]

Posters from the Federal Arts Project



Albert M. Bender for Illinois WPA Art Project, 1936-1941

Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, WPA Poster Collection [LC-USZ62-117504]



Vera Bock for the Federal Art Project, 1936-1941.

Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, WPA Poster Collection [LC-USZ62-51257 DLC]

1. What does each poster depict?
2. What is the message of these posters? Why is the message important?
3. What kind of work is each person doing? How do the jobs presented in the poster differ for men and women?

Murals from the Federal Arts Project

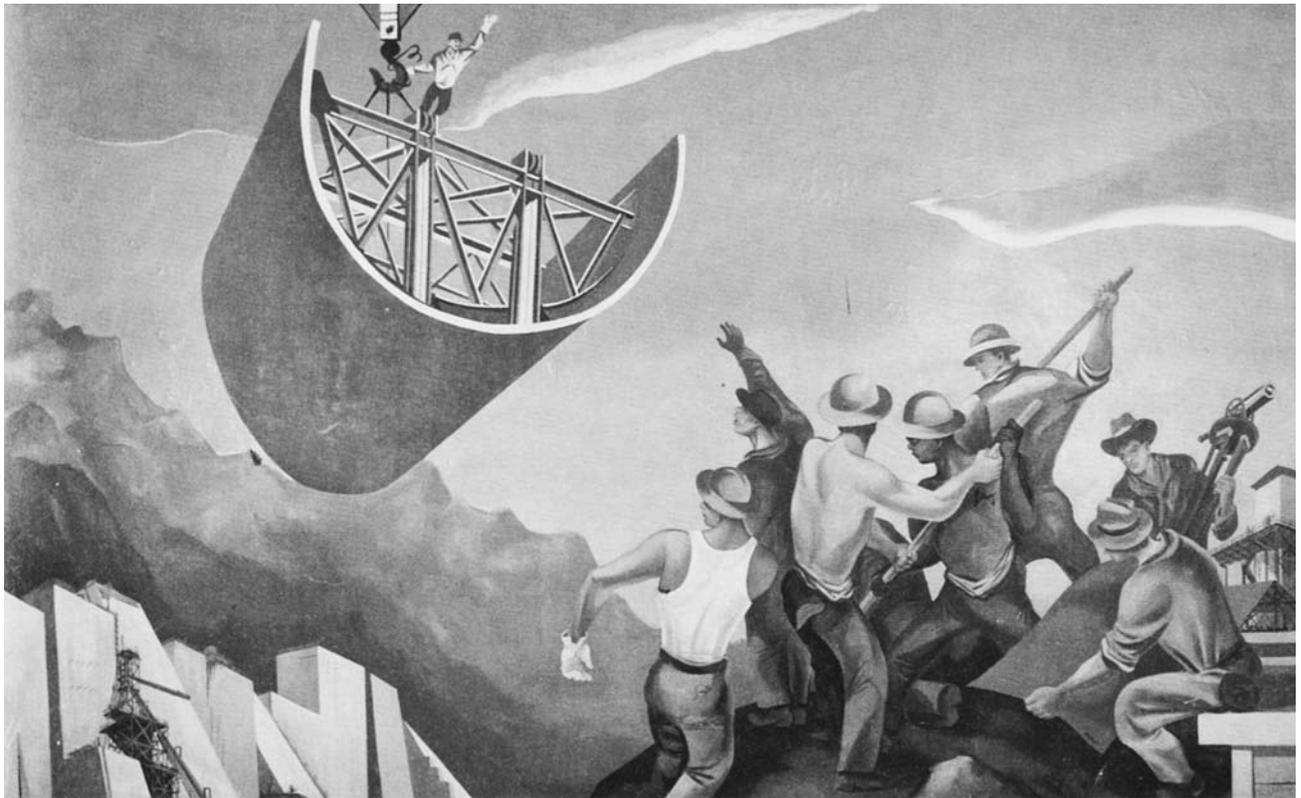


Figure 1. William Gropper, *Construction of the Dam* (Mural for main building, Department of Interior, Washington, D.C.), 1939.

Citation: U.S. Department of the Interior.

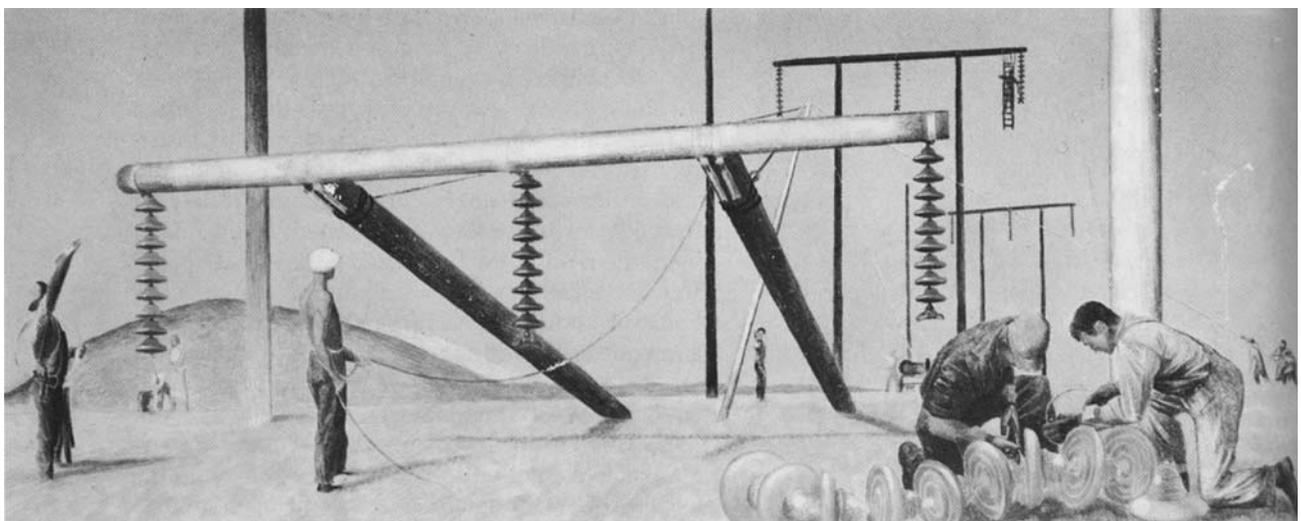


Figure 2. David Stone Martin, *Electrification* (Mural for Lenoir, TN post office), 1940.

Through programs like the Tennessee Valley Authority, which built a series of hydroelectric dams in the South, the New Deal supplied electricity to rural America for the first time. David Stone Martin's mural commemorated this achievement.

Treasury Section of Fine Arts, 1940. Fine Arts Collection, General Services Administration (FA4703) [http://www.nara.gov/exhall/new_deal_for_the_arts/index.html]



Figure 3. Maxine Albro, *The Orchard Scene* (Mural for Coit Tower, San Francisco), 1933-34.
UCI Visual Resources Collection, Slide #0212325

Discussion questions for murals

1. Examine the three murals and write down two or three details about each.

Figure 1 (<i>Dam Construction</i>)	Figure 2 (<i>Electrification</i>)	Figure 3 (<i>Orchard</i>)
a.	a.	a.
b.	b.	b.
c.	c.	c.

2. Murals frequently depicted scenes from local history. What can you tell about each location's history by looking at the mural? What kind of jobs did people have?

3. Who are the people in the murals? How does the mural portray them—are they heroes or victims? Strong or weak?

4. Why do you think there are so few women in these murals and posters?

EXCERPT FROM JOHN STEINBECK'S *THE GRAPES OF WRATH*: CHAPTER 14

The Western Land, nervous under the beginning change. The Western States, nervous as horses before a thunder storm. The great owners, nervous, sensing a change, knowing nothing of the nature of the change. The great owners, striking at the immediate thing, the widening government, the growing labor unity; striking at new taxes, at plans; not knowing these things are results, not causes. Results, not causes; results, not causes. The causes lie deep and simply—the causes are a hunger in a stomach, multiplied a million times; muscles and mind aching to grow, to work, to create, multiplied a million times. The last clear definite function of man—muscles aching to work, minds aching to create beyond the single need—this is man. To build a wall, to build a house, a dam, and in the wall and house and dam to put something of Manself, and to Manself take back something of the wall, the house, the dam; to take hard muscles from the lifting, to take the clear lines and form from conceiving. For man, unlike any other thing organic or inorganic in the universe, grows beyond his work, walks up the stairs of his concepts, emerges ahead of his accomplishments...

The Western States nervous under the beginning of change. Texas and Oklahoma, Kansas and Arkansas, New Mexico, Arizona, California. A single family moved from the land. Pa borrowed money from the bank, and now the bank wants the land. The land company—that's the bank when it has land—wants tractors, not families on the land. Is a tractor bad? Is the power that turns the long furrows wrong? If the tractor were ours it would be good—not mine, but ours. If our

tractor turned the long furrows of our land, it would be good. Not my land, but ours. We could love that tractor then as we have loved this land when it was ours. But this tractor does two things—it turns the land and turns us off the land. There is little difference between this tractor and a tank. The people are driven, intimidated, hurt by both. We must think about this.

One man, one family driven from the land; this rusty car creaking along the highway to the west. I lost my land, a single tractor took my land. I am alone and I am bewildered. And in the night one family camps in a ditch and another family pulls in and the tents come out. The two men squat on their hams and the women and children listen. Here is the node, you who hate change and fear revolution. Keep these two squatting men apart; make them hate, fear, suspect each other. Here is the anlage of the thing you fear. This is the zygote. For here "I lost my land" is changed; a cell is split and from its splitting grows the thing you hate—"We lost our land." The danger is here, for two men are not as lonely and perplexed as one. And from this first 'we' there grows a still more dangerous thing: "I have a little food" plus "I have none." If from this problem the sum is "We have a little food," the thing is on its way, the movement has direction. Only a little multiplication now, and this land, this tractor are ours...

If you who own the things people must have could understand this, you might preserve yourself. If you could separate causes from results, if you could know that Paine, Marx, Jefferson, Lenin, were results, not causes, you might survive. But that you cannot

know. For the quality of owning freezes you forever into “I,” and cuts you off forever from the “we.”

The Western states are nervous under the beginning of change. Need is the stimulus to concept, concept to action.

A half-million people moving over the country; a million more restive, ready to move; ten million more feeling the first nervousness.

The tractors turning the multiple furrows in the vacant land.

Source: John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* (New York: The Viking Press, 1939).

1. According to this excerpt, what is happening in the Western lands? What does the repeated phrase “results, not causes” mean? What is the cause? The result?
2. Whose story does this excerpt tell—why are the “owners” nervous? Is the author sympathetic to the story?
3. What is the significance of the pronouns “I,” “we,” and “you”? What does Steinbeck mean when he says “If you who own the things people must have could understand this, you might preserve yourself?”
4. Write two or three adjectives that describe the families in this excerpt.

THE SONGS OF WOODY GUTHRIE

"I Ain't Got No Home"

I ain't got no home, I'm just a-ramblin' 'round,
Just a wandrin' workin' man, I go from town to town.
Police make it hard wherever I may go
And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.

My brothers and my sisters are stranded on this road,
It's hot and dusty road that a million feet have trod;
Rich man took my home and he drove me from my door
And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.

Was I farmin' on the shares, and always I was poor;
My crops I lay into the banker's store.
My wife took down and died upon my cabin floor,
And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.

I mined in your mines and I gathered in your corn;
I been working, mister, since the day that I was born.
Now I worry all the time like I never did before
'Cause I ain't got no home in this world anymore

Now as I look around it's mighty plain to see
This wide and wicked world is a funny place to be.
The gambling man is rich and the working man is poor
And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.

Words and music by Woody Guthrie
TRO – copyright 1961 (renewed) 1964 (renewed) Ludlow Music, Inc. New York,
NY

Discussion questions for “I Ain’t Got No Home”

1. As you listen to Guthrie’s songs, examine the lyrics and right down two or three details about each work.
2. The way that Guthrie sounds is just as important as the words he sings. What does Guthrie sound like? What instrument does he use? Does the music sound complex? Does he use vocabulary that a person in the city would use? In addition to answering these questions, be sure to explain why the answers might be significant.
3. What events does Guthrie describe in his songs?
4. What kind of people do you think identified with (or liked) Guthrie’s music? What groups might not enjoy Guthrie’s songs?
5. What does Guthrie mean when he says “I ain’t got no home in this world anymore”?

FINAL QUESTION

During this lesson, you have examined primary sources that celebrated “real people,” not movie stars or famous politicians. Today

historians use these sources to explain what life was like during the 1920s and 1930s. Now it’s your turn: think about the best way

to document everyday life in your community in the present day.

Pretend that the federal government has decided to revive the Federal One Project. Your history class has been charged with creating an arts project that reflects life in your community, but you get to choose whether the project will portray life through photography, mural, oral history, or music. Given the opportunity, what parts of life in your community would you preserve?

Along with your group, you should decide what you would document. Why is it important? What kind of values are important to your project?

You should also decide how you would document life: Art? Oral history? Music? See the categories and questions below for guidance.

How does your project differ from the New Deal-era examples in the lesson?

Once you have thought about some of these questions, you should write a paragraph that outlines your project and how it will help future generations understand contemporary life in your community.

Federal Arts Project

Examples: photographers like Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans (actually employed by the FSA); muralists

- What kind of art will you produce—Photography? Film? Painting? Murals?
- What is the topic of your art—neighborhood life? HS life?
- Are there any “heroes” in your work?
- Where will your work be displayed?
- What will your art tell historians about everyday life in 200_?

Federal Writers’ Project

Examples: John Steinbeck, Richard Wright, Zora Neale Hurston; slave oral histories

- Will you write fiction or nonfiction?
- If nonfiction, who will you interview—other students? Relatives? Community members? What kinds of questions will you ask?
- Are there any “heroes” in your work?
- What will your writing tell historians about everyday life in 200_?

The Legacy of the New Deal: What was the long-term impact of the New Deal on American politics and society?

INTRODUCTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

In this final lesson plan on the Depression, students will attempt to assess the long-term impact of the New Deal on American politics and society. Using excerpts from political speeches, editorials, and popular culture, students will compare the programs and ideas of the 1930s to those of the past twenty years. Students will see how Americans have continued to debate issues such as the role of the federal government in the economy, the rights of organized labor, and the management of social welfare programs.

The first section asks students to summarize and compare brief excerpts drawn from famous speeches given by Franklin D. Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton. Each president used the speech to outline his outlook on the role of the federal government in the economy. Roosevelt clearly advocated aggressive use of government resources to ameliorate unemployment, as he requested power generally granted to the president only during wartime. On the other hand, Reagan, despite having been a supporter of Roosevelt in his early years, opined that government was the source of, not the solution to, economic malaise. Students should be reminded that Reagan did not end popular New Deal-era programs such as Social Security. Finally, Bill Clinton offered a mixed message on the role of government, as he attempted to reconcile the ideals of “teamwork,” which denotes support for government programs, and “self-reliance,” which denotes independence from government welfare.

The second and third sections of this lesson plan ask students to think about the long-term impact of New Deal “safety net” programs. In the section on Social Security, students read an excerpt of FDR’s message to Congress on “safety net” programs and then read an excerpted article about the issue of Social Security during the 2000 election. In order to keep the excerpts at a reasonable length, the summary of each candidate’s plan for the program was removed. Nevertheless, students should be able to glean that the program successfully reduced poverty levels among elderly Americans and that it is considered an important program in contemporary society. Indeed, since students have learned about “coalition building” during the New Deal era, teachers may wish to note that much of Social Security’s potency as an issue lies in the fact that elderly Americans vote in much higher proportions than their younger counterparts. In the third section, students read an excerpted article about changes to the welfare laws in 1996 and the letters to the editor that follow. This section may allow teachers to re-open the issue of responsibility for poverty, as the letters are evenly divided between those who call for greater government as-

STANDARDS ADDRESSED

Skills

■ Chronological and Spatial thinking

- Students compare the present with the past, evaluating the consequences of past events and decisions and determining the lessons that were learned.

■ Historical Interpretation

- Students show the connections, causal and otherwise, between particular historical events and larger social, economic, and political trends and developments.

Content

■ 11.6. Students analyze the different explanations for the Great Depression and how the New Deal fundamentally changed the role of the federal government.

- 11.6.4. Analyze the effects of and the controversies arising from New Deal economic policies and the expanded role of the federal government in society and the economy since the 1930s
- 11.6.5. Trace the advances and retreats of organized labor, from the creation of the American Federation of Labor and

the Congress of Industrial Organizations to current issues of a postindustrial, multinational economy, including the United Farm Workers in California.

TIME REQUIRED

- At least one hour using selected materials.

MATERIALS

- Photocopies of selected materials.

sistance to the poor and those who argue that family and self-reliance are better solutions to the problem.

The lesson also asks students to consider how Depression-era celebration of the common worker compares to contemporary portrayals of workers. Coit Tower murals, which include *Factory Workers* by Ralph Stackpole, depict life in California in a way that emphasizes the importance of worker cooperation. Other panels of the mural are viewable at www.coittower.org. Students may also wish to reflect on works created by the Federal One project covered in earlier lessons. While we do not intend to suggest that the popular television program *The Simpsons* matches Rivera's mural in artistic quality, it is nevertheless true that Homer Simpson, as a nuclear power plant safety inspector, represents one of the few depictions of a working-class American on contemporary television; students may have other examples of shows that represent working-class Americans on contemporary television. Teachers may want to ask students to think about the jobs that are depicted on American television programs. Likewise, teachers may wish to point out how the postwar consumer economy has meant that Americans see themselves as consumers rather than producers.

Discussion Format

This lesson is divided into four sections of varying lengths and level of difficulty. Teachers should decide if they want to choose some of the primary sources in advance of the class meeting. Once students have read and discussed the materials—whether individually, in groups, or as a class, they should construct a chart that assesses the attitudes toward each section in the 1930s (“then”) and in contemporary society (“now”). Students should attempt to explain why the programs succeeded in the 1930s as well as why they continue to be debated in contemporary society.

The Legacy of the New Deal: What was the long-term impact of the New Deal on American politics and society?

INTRODUCTION FOR STUDENTS

During the past several lessons, you have learned about the impact of the New Deal during the 1930s and 1940s. These years saw important changes in the role of the federal government in the economy, the rights of organized labor, and the existence of social

welfare programs like Social Security. As a result, politicians and ordinary citizens still debate the effect that the programs had on American politics and society. In this lesson, you will read and compare several political speeches, editorials, and popular culture from the

1930s, the 1980s, and the 1990s that highlight positive and negative aspects of New Deal programs. At the end of the class period, your teacher may ask you to debate whether the New Deal had an overall positive or negative effect on American society.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN THE ECONOMY

During the 1930s, the federal government assumed an expanded role in managing the economy. Since then, politicians have continued to debate the government's role in shaping and managing the economy.

Read the three excerpts below and consider how each president would answer the following question: What role should the federal government have in managing the economy?

Franklin D. Roosevelt, First Inaugural Address (March 4, 1933)

...Our greatest primary task is to put people to work. This is no unsolvable problem if we face it wisely and courageously. It can be accomplished in part by direct recruiting by the Government itself, treating the task as we would treat the emergency of a war, but at the same time, through this employment, accomplishing greatly needed projects to stimulate and reorganize the use of our natural resources...

... in the event that the national emergency is still critical, I shall not evade the clear course of duty that will then confront me. I shall ask the Congress for the one remaining instrument to meet the crisis - broad Executive power to wage a war against the emergency, as great as the power that would be given to me if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe...

Source: New Deal Network (<http://newdeal.feri.org/texts/62.htm>)

1. What, according to Roosevelt on the previous page, is the nation's "primary task," and what solution does he propose to this problem?
2. What imagery or metaphor does Roosevelt use to describe the task ahead?

Ronald Reagan, First Inaugural Address (January 20, 1981)

...These United States are confronted with an economic affliction of great proportions...

The economic ills we suffer have come upon us over several decades. They will not go away in days, weeks, or months, but they will go away. They will go away because we as Americans have the capacity now, as we have had in the past, to do whatever needs to be done to preserve this last and greatest bastion of freedom.

In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem...

Source: *Reagan as President: Contemporary Views of the Man, His Politics, and His Policies*, edited by Paul Boyer

1. What "affliction," according to Reagan, is facing the nation? What is the source of the problem, and what is the solution?
2. How does Reagan's description of the role of government in the economy differ from Roosevelt's?

Bill Clinton, State Of The Union Address (January 23, 1996)

...We know big government does not have all the answers. We know there's not a program for every problem. We have worked to give the American people a smaller, less bureaucratic government in Washington. And we have to give the American people one that lives within its means.

The era of big government is over. But we cannot go back to the time when our citizens were left to fend for themselves. Instead, we must go forward as one America, one nation working together to meet the challenges we face together. Self-reliance and teamwork are not opposing virtues; we must have both...

Source: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/special/states/docs/sou96.htm>

1. What did Clinton mean when he said, "We know there's not a program for every problem?" Do you think Roosevelt would agree or disagree with that assessment?
2. How do Clinton's remarks compare to Reagan's statement that "government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem"?
3. Now that you have read each excerpt, rank each president according to the role he advocated for federal government. Place a "1" next to the president who wanted the largest role, a "2" for the president who advocated the next largest role, and a "3" next to the president who advocated the smallest role of the federal government in the economy.

“SAFETY NET” PROGRAMS: SOCIAL SECURITY

FDR recommended four types of “safety net” benefits: unemployment, old-age benefits, federal aid to

dependent children, and a strengthened public health service. In this message to Congress, the president

explained why he believed these benefits were necessary.

A Message to the Congress on Social Security Franklin D. Roosevelt, January 17, 1935

...The establishment of sound means toward a greater future economic security of the American people is dictated by a prudent consideration of the hazards involved in our national life. No one can guarantee this country against the dangers of future depressions but we can reduce these dangers, and we can provide the means of mitigating their results. This plan for economic security is at once a measure of prevention and a method of alleviation.

We pay now for the dreadful consequence of economic insecurity—and dearly. This plan presents a more equitable and infinitely less expensive means of meeting these costs. We cannot afford to neglect the plain duty before us...

Source: New Deal Network (<http://newdeal.feri.org/speeches/1935b.htm>)

1. What does FDR mean when he says “we can eliminate many of the factors that cause economic depressions, and we can provide the means of mitigating their results”?
2. Which groups benefit from the four types of “safety net” programs? How might such programs affect the way that Americans voted?

Editorial: "Campaigning on Social Security,"
The New York Times (29 May 2000)

Social Security has emerged as a critical issue in this year's presidential campaign, but neither candidate seems prepared to address the system's long-term financial problems. Instead, Gov. George W. Bush wants to let individuals invest a small part of their Social Security contributions in the stock market, where he thinks they will earn a better return, and Vice President Al Gore proposes to keep the system largely intact with an infusion of general tax revenues. Neither proposal would really stabilize the system in the long run. In truth, though Social Security is projected to become bankrupt in four decades, the system is not all that far out of kilter. It would not be hard for bold politicians to devise a fix.

Social Security may well be, as Governor Bush has said, "the single most successful government program in American history." It was created in 1935, during the depths of the depression, to provide a guaranteed income to retired workers for as long as they live. Unlike private pension plans, Social Security benefits keep pace with inflation and, unlike 401(k)'s and other popular private plans, Social Security benefits do not fluctuate with stock and bond markets. Social Security provides the majority of income for most retirees and all the income for about a fifth of the elderly. From its inception, the system has taken in payroll taxes from the working generation and turned almost all of them over to retirees. At the core of Social Security are the notions of social insurance—everyone participates in a common plan—and redistribution—the program tilts in favor of low-paid workers. The benefits for low-paid workers are about 80 percent of their average lifetime earnings, while benefits for high-paid workers are about 30 percent of average earnings. The progressive formula has cut the poverty rate among the elderly by two-thirds, reducing their poverty to below that of the general population. That is a remarkable triumph...

1. In your own words, write down the difference between George W. Bush and Al Gore's approach to Social Security.
2. According to the article, who receives Social Security? How is it different from other plans?
3. According to the article, why has Social Security been a success?

POVERTY

In 1996, Bill Clinton signed a law that replaced the cash safety net for children instituted during the Great Depression (and extended during the

“Great Society” of 1960s) with time limits and work requirements for parents. The article and letters that follow are excerpted from the New York Times, which

attempted to measure the impact of the law on extended families. The law was renewed in 2002.

“Life After Welfare: The Grandmothers; As Welfare Rolls Shrink, Load on Relatives Grows”

By Jason Deparle (*The New York Times*, February 21, 1999)

As Wisconsin drives its welfare rolls to record lows, the number of grandmothers pressed into action is reaching unexpected highs. Unwilling or unable to work for public aid, many of the state’s most troubled mothers have lost their benefits, often en route to drug clinics, jail cells, shelters or the streets. And grandmothers like Ms. Smith -- angry, worried, or plain exhausted -- are being left to care for the children abandoned along the way.

No anti-poverty idea has animated the last decade as much as “ending welfare.” And no state has drawn closer than Wisconsin, where a universal work requirement has cut the cash welfare rolls by as much as 91 percent. (The food stamp and Medicaid rolls have also shown sharp, though less extensive, declines.) Unlikely as it once would have seemed, policy makers from across the globe now routinely descend on Milwaukee, the state’s former welfare bastion, searching for signposts of the future.

Both President Clinton and his Republican adversaries have celebrated the dwindling rolls -- in Wisconsin

and across the country -- as evidence of clear success. Skeptics warn that families are suffering out of sight and that a flagging economy may yet leave them sleeping on grates...

...grandmothers like Jessielean Smith are busier, and more burdened, than ever. As a grandmother summoned to new duty by welfare’s demise, Ms. Smith is typically young, typically ill, and typically overwhelmed. She has arthritis in her hand and legs, high blood pressure, and a weight problem that has slowed her gait with 260 pounds.

...Some supporters of the new system say crises like the Smiths’ are inevitable -- a short-term cost of long-term gain. Welfare gave drug users and other troubled women a way to ignore their problems, they say. But they hope a work requirement, in bringing such problems to light, will ultimately prove a steppingstone to family health.

Indeed, for her part, Carmelina Smith still predicts a happy ending. “My life has changed a lot since I’ve been in prison,” she said. “I’m very much into Christ now.”

But Jessielean Smith is less sanguine

and more fatigued—especially the week after inheriting even more grandchildren. Her son’s girlfriend just went to jail for selling drugs, sending two more children into Ms. Smith’s care. “I’m fixing to go to the insane asylum,” she said.

In her view, welfare is supposed to be a shock absorber, not a shock producer. “This is unfair and unjust,” for herself and for the children, she said. “If Carmelina had been getting public aid, she wouldn’t have stole the money.”

1. According to this article, why have grandmothers taken a role in rearing their grandchildren?
2. List one reason given for changing the welfare laws and one reason for not changing the welfare laws.

Reader responses to “Life After Welfare” (*The New York Times*, February 26, 1999)

[1] To the Editor:
Your Feb. 21 front-page article on welfare reflects all that is wrong with a system that strips societies of all their natural checks and balances. Your focus is on grandmothers’ pain and ordeal as they are burdened by a second motherhood after dwindling welfare benefits force their daughters to go out to work. It sounds callous and cruel, but the most efficient and cost-effective way to keep social excesses under control is by handing the responsibility of such control back to the people involved and their families, where it belongs. Maybe fewer teen-agers will feel free to bring babies into the world trusting that society will take full care of them when their mothers realize that it is they who will pay the penalty

[2] To the Editor:
Your Feb. 21 front-page article on the burden that welfare reform places on grandparents fails to note the plight of the thousands of children in families who are not fortunate enough to have an extended-family “safety net.” In fact, the impact of reform is felt most among children, who with their families are taking to the streets in greater numbers. The Institute for Children and Poverty reports that the average age of a homeless individual in the United States is 9. Further, the preliminary results of Milwaukee’s welfare-to-work program have been less than promising. According to that city’s Hunger Task Force, participants in the program were more likely to use food pantries, obtain food from friends or use illegal means to obtain food for their families.

[3] To the Editor:

“As Welfare Rolls Shrink, Load on Relatives Grows” (front page, Feb. 21) is a remarkable homily on the liberal catechism that it is somehow unfair to burden the extended family with the costs of the foolishness or indolence of its members. The implication is that it would be more fair if the state were to continue subsidizing the younger people’s tragic reluctance to take responsibility for themselves. It is easy to indulge the fantasy that welfare reform should only relieve dependency. But by thrusting responsibility on individuals, it is inevitable that some should refuse to bear the load. The solution to this natural human failing is not G-men and mandated wealth transfers but the intervention of a stronger, more caring and more enduring institution: the family.

[4] To the Editor:

The statement by Jason Turner, the city’s welfare commissioner, that “we need to create, if you will, a personal crisis in individuals’ lives,” is shockingly void of insight and compassion (front page, Feb. 20). Isn’t homelessness, often caused by sickness, abuse or other companions of poverty, crisis enough? Self-reliance is an important social goal, but it will never be accomplished by punitive policies that may result in truly desperate parents and children living on the streets. Providing social services whose goal is job-ready citizens with access to quality education and child care seems a more enlightened route to personal productivity. The result might be a reduction in the rate of homelessness through the enhancement of human dignity.

1. Which letters favor assistance for the poor? What reasons do they offer for their arguments? Why might these authors use words like “compassion”?
2. Which letters favor less government involvement? What institutions should assist the poor, according to these Americans? Why might these authors use words like “responsibility”?

CULTURE: HEROES AND ANTI-HEROES

During the 1930s, artists celebrated the average industrial worker. In 1934, the Public Works Art Project in San Francisco commissioned several artists to design a mural that depicted life in California dur-

ing the 1930s. The artists created a series of murals that depicted among other things, agricultural work, journalism, meatpacking, and commerce as well as scenes from rural life. The panel on this page, by Ralph

Stackpole, depicts life on the assembly line. In more recent years, workers have been portrayed differently in American culture; Homer Simpson is perhaps one of the few factory workers on American television.



Factory Workers (Mural for Coit Towers). Ralph Stackpole, 1933-34



Homer Simpson at the Springfield nuclear power plant

1. Examine what is happening in each image. What are the workers doing? Write down a few words that describe the workers in each image.
2. Compare the workers in Rivera's mural to Homer. Which is more heroic?
3. Can you think of any television shows or movies that have characters who work at a factory? What kind of jobs do characters have in movies or on television?

Final Assessment: Did the New Deal go too far or not far enough?

INTRODUCTION AND ASSESSMENT GOALS FOR TEACHERS

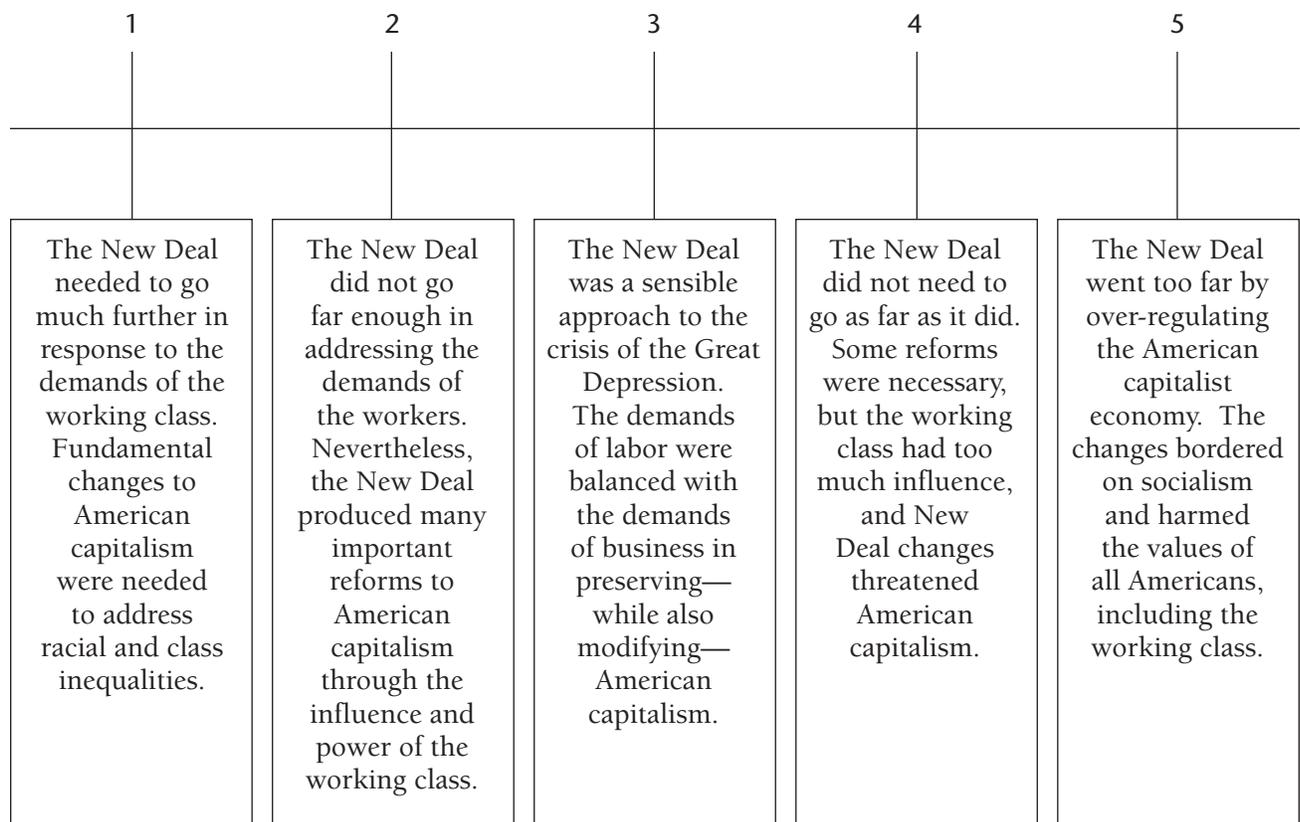
This unit has introduced students to a variety of perspectives about the New Deal—not only those of its supporters, but also those of its critics on both the Left and the Right. As a culminating activity for the unit, students should compose a written essay that asks them to create their own interpretation about the New Deal’s impact on American society and government. Students will decide upon a thesis statement, which may be one of their own or may be drawn from one of the five thesis statements presented on the chart below. Based on the materials provided in this unit, students should develop a well-supported argument in defense of their thesis statement. Evidence must be drawn from the materials used in the unit of study, although teachers may wish to include additional outside materials. The final product is expected to be a five-paragraph (at minimum) essay, ranging from two to three pages in length. If teachers don’t wish to assign this essay as an in-class test or homework assignment, they might wish to consider developing another in-class assignment around the assignment and rubric. (See Essay Prompt for Students on following page.)

Final Assessment:
Did the New Deal go too far or not far enough?

ESSAY PROMPT FOR STUDENTS

Evaluate whether the changes in government and American capitalism brought about by the New Deal went too far or not far enough. In your response, pay particular attention to the degree to which the New Deal addressed and reflected the demands of labor and the working class.

The first paragraph of your essay must contain a thesis statement that will likely fall somewhere along the continuum represented below. Once you have determined the position you want to take, you may create your own statement, or you may adapt one of the following statements.



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“These units in US History demonstrate to students that history matters to the past, present, and future. They expose students to the tools of the historians’ trade, helping them develop their own sense of what happened and why. Through these units, young historians have a chance to explore the connections among the many regions, groups, and ideas that have shaped the history of the United States. The units are carefully calibrated with the California State Content Standards for US eleventh grade history in order to make these dynamic, engaging lessons meaningful to the real needs and interests of teachers and students in California schools.”

—Vicki L. Ruiz, Professor of History and Chicano-Latino Studies, The University of California, Irvine

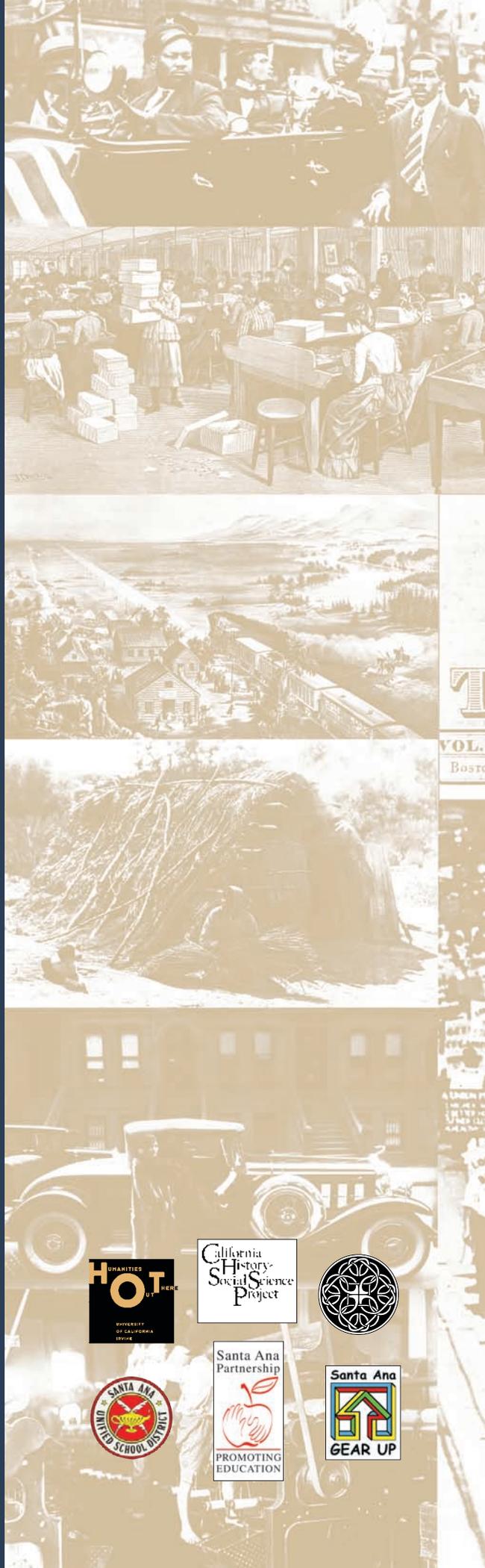
CONTENT STANDARDS COVERED

Skills

1. Chronological and Spatial thinking
2. Historical Research, Evidence, and Point of View
3. Historical Interpretation

Content standards

- 11.6. Students analyze the different explanations for the Great Depression and how the New Deal fundamentally changed the role of the federal government.
- 11.8. Students analyze the economic boom and social transformation of post-World War II America.
- 11.9. Students analyze U.S. foreign policy since World War II.



Creating Economic Citizenship: The Depression and the New Deal—Part II



Page 14 Image: Off for the melon fields (Mexican labor). Imperial Valley, California (June 1935).

Credit: Dorothea Lange

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA-OWI Collection [LC-USF34- 001620-C]



Page 14 Image: Mexican migrant woman harvesting tomatoes. Santa Clara Valley, California. (November 1938)

Credit: Dorothea Lange.

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA-OWI Collection [LC-USF34- 018408-E]



Page 16 Image: Drought refugee families are now mingling with and supplanting Mexican field laborers in the Southwest. Near Chandler, Arizona (May 1937).

Credit: Dorothea Lange

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA-OWI Collection [LC-USF34- 016797-C]



Page 18 Image: Children of migratory Mexican field workers. The older one helps tie carrots in the field. Coachella Valley, California (February 1937).

Credit: Dorothea Lange.
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USF34- 016459-E]



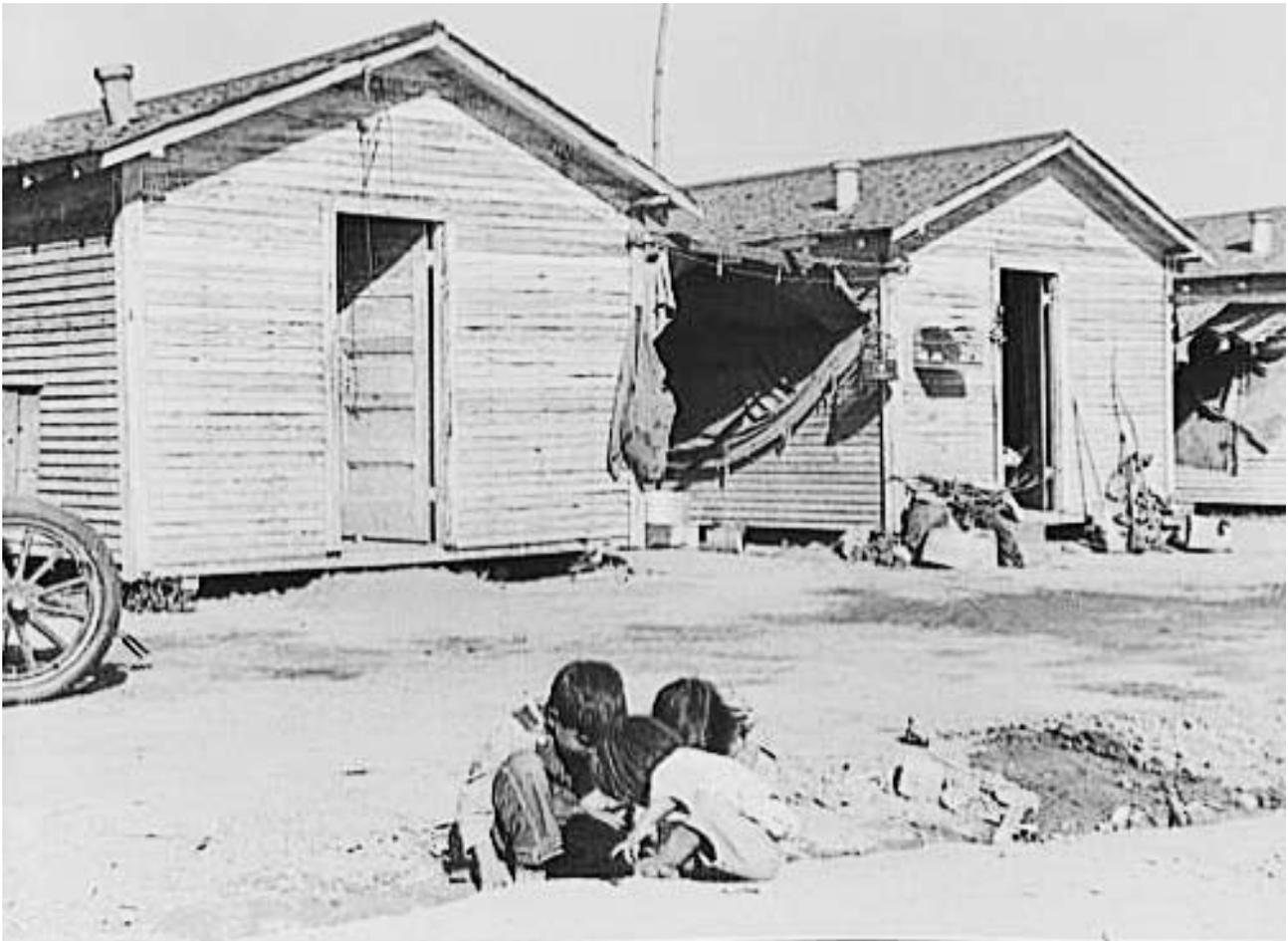
Page 18 Image: The kind of work drought refugees and Mexicans do in the Imperial Valley, California. Planting cantaloupe (1937).

Credit: Dorothea Lange
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USF34- 016114-E]



Page 22 Image: Mexican seasonal labor contracted for by planters, Mississippi.

Credit: Marion Post Wolcott. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USF33-030560-M1]



Page 23 Image A: Company housing for cotton workers near Corcoran, California (November 1936).

Credit: Dorothea Lange
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USF34- 009934-C]



Page 23 Image B: Migratory Mexican field worker's home on the edge of a frozen pea field. Imperial Valley, California (March 1937)

Credit: Dorothea Lange.
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division
[LC-USF34T01-16425-C]



Page 23 Image C: Camp site of striking Mexican workers. Corcoran, California (1933)

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USF344-007487-ZB]



Page 26 Image: Tranquillity, California. Sunday morning service. Migrants from the southwest bring their religions with them to California (February 1939).

Credit: Dorothea Lange
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division
[LC-USF34- 018780-E]



Page 36 Image: Pickets on the highway calling workers from the fields, 1933 cotton strike.
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection, [LC-USF344-007484-ZB]

10 SOUTHERN
ers today and
on and mini-
-35.

Los Angeles Times

In Two
PART I

MORNING, APRIL 24, 1931.

CITY NEWS—EDITORIAL—

Mexicans and Families About to Embark on Trek Back to Native Land



They Take Few Belongings
Photographs of sad-faced group of Mexicans at Central Station yesterday preparing to leave the United States for their native land.

Page 37 Image



Page 39 Image: Agricultural. Mexican cotton pickers. Because of the nation's manpower shortage, which threatened the United States' summer cotton crops, Mexican workers were recently asked to assist farmers near Corpus Christi, Texas, during the cotton harvest season. (Nov. 1942).

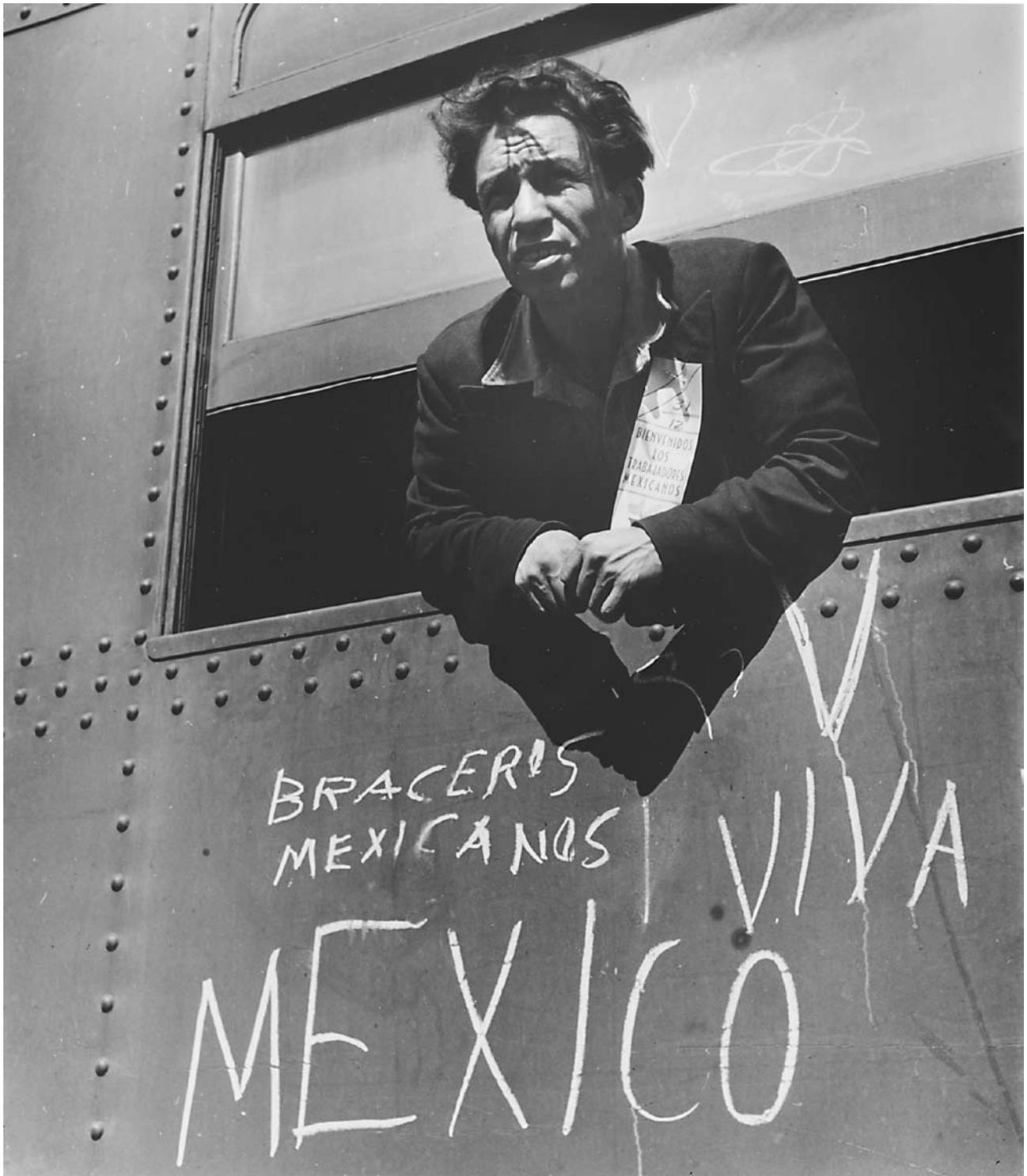
Credit: Howard R. Hollem

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA-OWI Collection [LC-USE6- D-007281]



Page 39 Image: Agricultural. Mexican cotton pickers. Surrounded by the soft white cotton blossoms whose harvesting is essential to America's war effort, this Mexican girl takes a moment's rest from her strenuous picking job. She's one of hundreds of Good Neighbors who gave a helping hand to the farmers near Corpus Christi, Texas, by harvesting the summer cotton crop. (Nov. 1942).
Credit: Howard R. Hollem

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division,
FSA-OWI Collection [LC-USE6- D-007285]



Page 41 Image: Arrival of the first braceros (c.1942)

Credit: Dorothea Lange
Oakland Museum of California



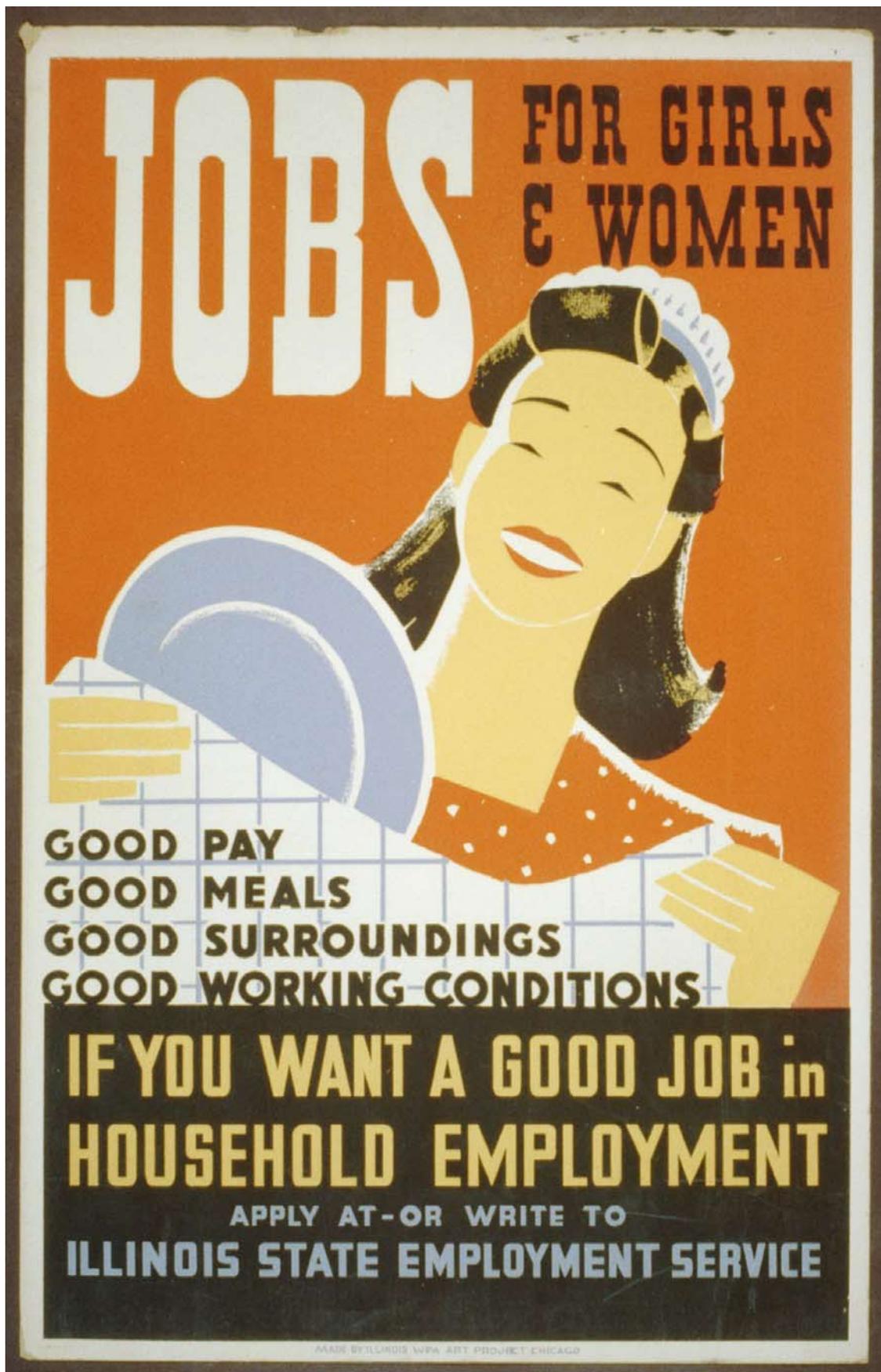
Page 49 Image: A poster of a blacksmith designed by Harry Herzog for the Works Progress Administration.

Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, WPA Poster Collection [LC-USZC2-1116 DLC]



Page 49 Image: WPA poster design on blue background.

Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, WPA Poster Collection [LCU5ZC2-5357]

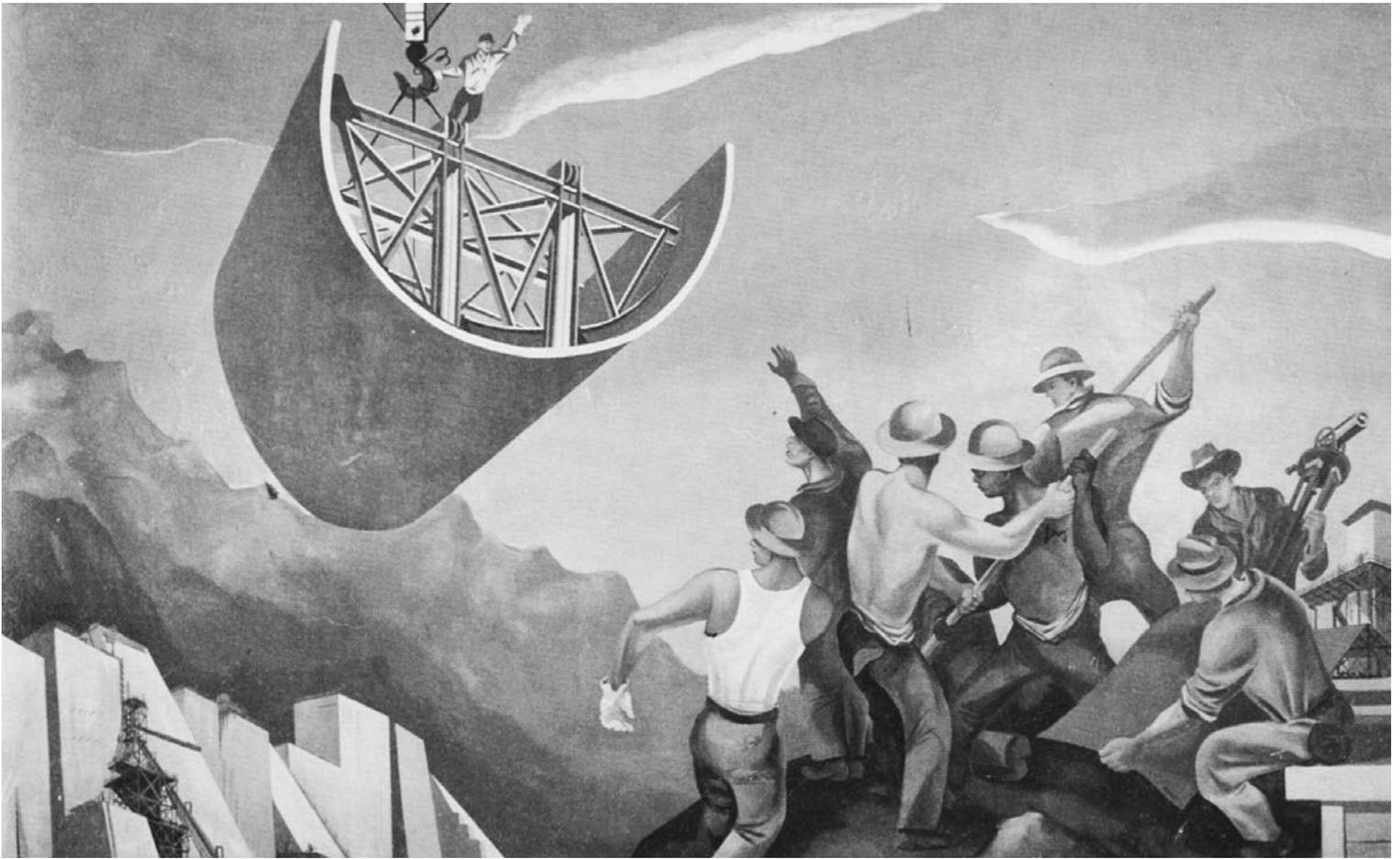


Page 50 Image: Albert M. Bender for Illinois WPA Art Project, 1936-1941
Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, WPA Poster Collection [LC-USZ62-117504]



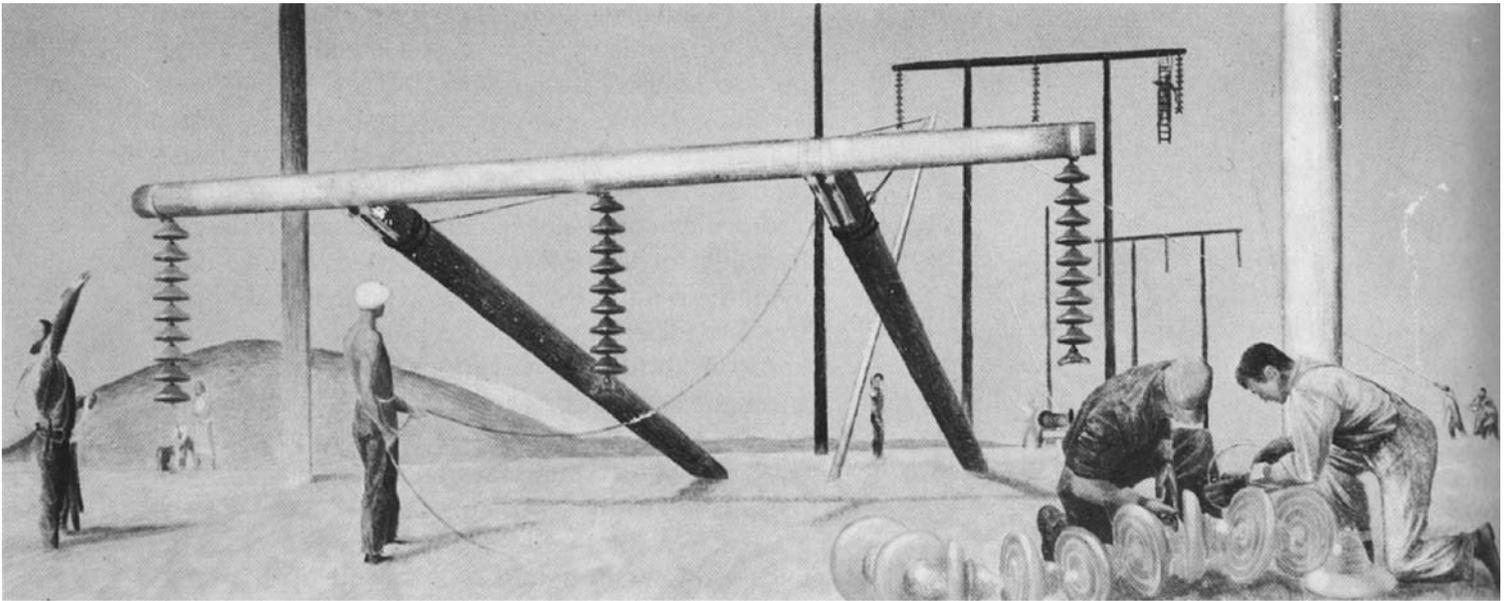
Cover/Page 50 Image: Vera Bock for the Federal Art Project, 1936-1941.

Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, WPA Poster Collection [LC-USZ62-51257 DLC]



Page 51 Image, Figure 1: William Gropper, *Construction of the Dam* (Mural for main building, Department of Interior, Washington, D.C.), 1939.

Citation: U.S. Department of the Interior.



Page 51 Image, Figure 2: David Stone Martin, *Electrification* (Mural for Lenoir, TN post office), 1940.

Through programs like the Tennessee Valley Authority, which built a series of hydroelectric dams in the South, the New Deal supplied electricity to rural America for the first time. David Stone Martin's mural commemorated this achievement.

Treasury Section of Fine Arts, 1940. Fine Arts Collection, General Services Administration (FA4703) [http://www.nara.gov/exhall/new_deal_for_the_arts/index.html]



Page 52 Image, Figure 3: Maxine Albro, *The Orchard Scene* (Mural for Coit Tower, San Francisco), 1933-34.



Page 70 Image: *Factory Workers* (Mural for Coit Towers). Ralph Stackpole, 1933-34



Page 71 Image: *Homer Simpson at the Springfield nuclear power plant*