

Unit 5: The Great Depression and the New Deal

Document Based Question

Part A

DOCUMENT-BASED ESSAY QUESTION

This question is based on the accompanying documents (1-12). Some of the documents have been edited for the purposes of the question. As you analyze the documents, take into account both the source of each document and any point of view that may be presented in the document.

Historical Context:

Following the economic boom of the 1920s, the United States entered a period of prolonged economic depression. Known as the Great Depression, many citizens of the United States were greatly affected by it. During the Roosevelt Administrations, several economic initiatives were developed to limit the effects of the Great Depression and allow the American economy to prosper once again.

Task:

Using information from the documents and your knowledge of United States history and government, answer the questions that follow each document in Part A. Your answers to the questions will help you write your response to the essay question in Part B:

Were the Roosevelt Administrations and the New Deal programs effective in overcoming the Great Depression and rebuilding the U.S. economy?

Describe the economic, political and social effects of the Great Depression.

Discuss the strategies used by the Roosevelt Administrations to deal with the problems leading to and created by the Depression.

Discuss the challenges faced by the Roosevelt Administrations to enact their policies.

Discuss the long-term effects of the New Deal.

Part B

Essay

Directions:

Write a well-organized essay that includes an introduction, several paragraphs, and a conclusion. Use evidence from at least six documents in the body of the essay. Support your response with relevant facts, examples, and details. Include information from your textbook and notes. (Do not use extraneous sources, such as Wikipedia). The essay should be between two to three typewritten pages double spaced.

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Document Based Question

Document 1

"My father walked the streets everyday. . . . My mother went to work. I even worked, playing the piano for dancing class on Saturday mornings for fifty cents an hour. My mother would find a few pennies and we would go to the greengrocer and wait until he threw out the stuff that was beginning to rot. We would pick out the best rotted potato and greens and carrots that were already soft. Then we would go to the butcher and beg a marrow bone. And then with the few pennies we would buy a box of barley, and we'd have soup to last us for three or four days. I remember she would say to me sometimes, 'You go out and do it. I'm ashamed.'"

—Clara Hancox, quoted in *The Century*, by Peter Jennings and Todd Brewster

- How did the Great Depression affect Clara and her family?

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Document 2

Those families who had lived on a little piece of land, who had lived and died on forty acres, had eaten or starved on the produce of forty acres, had now the whole West to rove in. And they scampered about, looking for work; and the highways were streams of people, and the ditch banks were lines of people. . . . The great highways streamed with moving people. . . .

And this was good, for wages went down and prices stayed up. The great owners were glad. . . . And wages went down and prices stayed up. And pretty soon now we'll have serfs again. . . .

And the little farmers . . . lost their farms, and they were taken by the great owners, the banks, and the companies.

. . . As time went on, there were fewer farms. The little farmers moved into town for a while and exhausted their credit, exhausted their friends, their relatives. And then they too were on the highways. And the roads were crowded with men ravenous for work, murderous for work.

And the companies, the banks worked at their own doom and they did not know it. The fields were fruitful, and starving men moved on the roads. . . .

The great companies did not know that the line between hunger and anger is a thin line. . . . On the highways the people moved like ants and searched for work, for food. And the anger began to ferment.

The Grapes of Wrath
by John Steinbeck

- What is the setting of this passage from *The Grapes of Wrath*?
- Who are the main characters? What is their relationship?
- What is the cause of the farmers' anger?

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Document 3



Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

Senator Harry Byrd of Virginia questions Harry L. Hopkins about the effectiveness of government spending.

- What is Hopkins trying to fix by spending money?

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Document 4

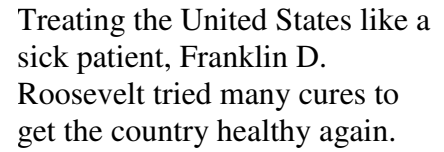
Social Security

Referring to the Social Security Act, Frances Perkins recalled, "Nothing of the sort had ever come before the Congress of the United States." The act altered many Americans' ideas about the government's responsibility to ensure the welfare of citizens. Since its beginning in the 1930s, the program has expanded to cover children, people with disabilities, and many others. Social Security also manages numerous other welfare programs, including subsidized school lunches. Providing monthly pensions to retired people or their survivors is the best-known Social Security program. Ida May Fuller of Ludlow, Vermont, was the first person to receive a monthly Social Security pension. Her first check, for \$22.54, arrived January 31, 1940.

Over time, the monthly payments have risen along with the cost of living. At the same time, more people are covered by Social Security. Although many people feared that this situation would eventually force the Social Security program into bankruptcy, legislators have long been reluctant to alter the system. Finally, in the late 1990s Congress enacted several measures to reform Social Security and guard it for future generations.

- How has Social Security changed over the years?
- What has been the long-term impact of Social Security?

Document 5
Dr. New Deal
Stock Montage, Inc.



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Document 6

"Talking Dust Bowl."

"Back in nineteen twenty-seven
I had a little farm and I called that heaven,
Well, the price was up and the rain came down
And I hauled my crops all in to town. . . .
Rain quit and the wind got high,
And a black old dust storm filled the sky,
And I swapped my farm for a Ford machine
And I poured it full of this gasoline. . . .
We got out to the West Coast broke,
So dad gum hungry I thought I'd croak,
And I bummed up a spud or two,
And my wife fixed up a 'tater stew."
Woody Guthrie

- What experiences of the Great Depression does Guthrie describe?

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Document 7



Americans working for the CCC earned a living and helped improve the environment.

- What do these workers appear to be doing?
- What can you infer about the effect of the CCC on their lives?

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Document 8



The Granger Collection, New York

With the economy struggling, the government stepped in to help Americans find work.

- What types of jobs do you think this poster was advertising?

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Document 8

American Indians.

Library of Congress



This woman and her child were photographed in 1936 at their home on the Mescalero Apache Reservation.

- What can you tell about this woman's standard of living?
- In what ways did the New Deal affect minorities?

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Document 9

“President Roosevelt was elected on November 8, 1932. People look upon an elected President as the President. This is January 1935. We are in our third year of the Roosevelt depression, with the conditions growing worse . . . We must become awakened! We must know the truth and speak the truth. There is no use to wait three more years. It is not Roosevelt or ruin; it is Roosevelt's ruin.”

Senator Huey Long's "Share Our Wealth" Speech, 1935

- What is the basis of Long's criticism of Roosevelt's New Deal policy?

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Document 10

Year	First New Deal	Provisions
1933	Emergency Banking Act	Gave the administration the right to regulate banks
1933	Farm Credit Administration (FCA)	Refinanced farm mortgages at lower interest and for longer terms
1933	Economy Act	Proposed to balance the budget through savings measures
1933	Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)	Employed young men on public-works projects
1933	Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA)	Provided grants to states for relief efforts
1933	Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA)	Paid farmers to reduce crops; funded by a tax on food processors; later declared unconstitutional
1933	Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)	Constructed dams and power plants to improve social and economic welfare in the region
1933	Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC)	Loaned money to home owners to refinance mortgages
1933	Banking Act of 1933	Created FDIC and authorized branch banking
1933	Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC)	Insured individual bank deposits up to \$5,000
1933	National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA)	Established NRA and PWA; later declared unconstitutional
1933	National Recovery Administration (NRA)	Regulated industry through fair-trade codes for businesses
1933	Public Works Administration (PWA)	Constructed roads, public buildings, and other projects designed to increase employment and business activity
1933	Civil Works Administration (CWA)	Employed jobless people to work on federal, state, and local projects
1934	Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)	Regulated the securities market
1934	Federal Housing Administration (FHA)	Insured bank loans for building and repairing houses
Year	Second New Deal	Provisions
1935	Works Progress Administration (WPA)	Employed people to do artistic, public-works, and research projects
1935	Soil Conservation Service (SCS)	Promoted control and prevention of soil erosion
1935	Rural Electrification Administration (REA)	Provided electricity to rural areas lacking public utilities
1935	National Youth Administration (NYA)	Provided job training and work for people ages 16–25; provided part-time jobs for needy students
1935	National Labor Relations Act (Wagner-Connery Act)	Recognized rights of labor to organize and bargain collectively; regulated labor practices
1935	Social Security Act	Provided unemployment benefits, pensions for the elderly, and survivor's insurance
1935	Revenue Act of 1935 (Wealth Tax Act)	Increased taxes on the wealthy
1937	Farm Security Administration (FSA)	Provided loans to help tenant farmers buy land
1938	Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938 (AAA)	Increased government regulation of crop production and increased payments to farmers
1938	Revenue Act of 1938	Reduced taxes on large corporations and increased taxes on smaller businesses
1938	Fair Labor Standards Act (Wages and Hours Law)	Established minimum wage of 40 cents per hour and maximum workweek of 40 hours for businesses in interstate commerce

Source: Encyclopedia of American History

Selected New Deal Programs

Franklin D. Roosevelt proposed a wide number of programs to aid in the nation's recovery after he assumed office in 1933. These programs became the first New Deal. Two years later he outlined a broader program a social reform in the Second New Deal.

- Which New Deal programs continue to affect the lives of U.S. citizens?

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Document 11

Programs sponsored by the National Youth Administration (NYA) helped boost family incomes so that children could stay in school. Helen Farmer recalled working in an NYA program as a teenager.

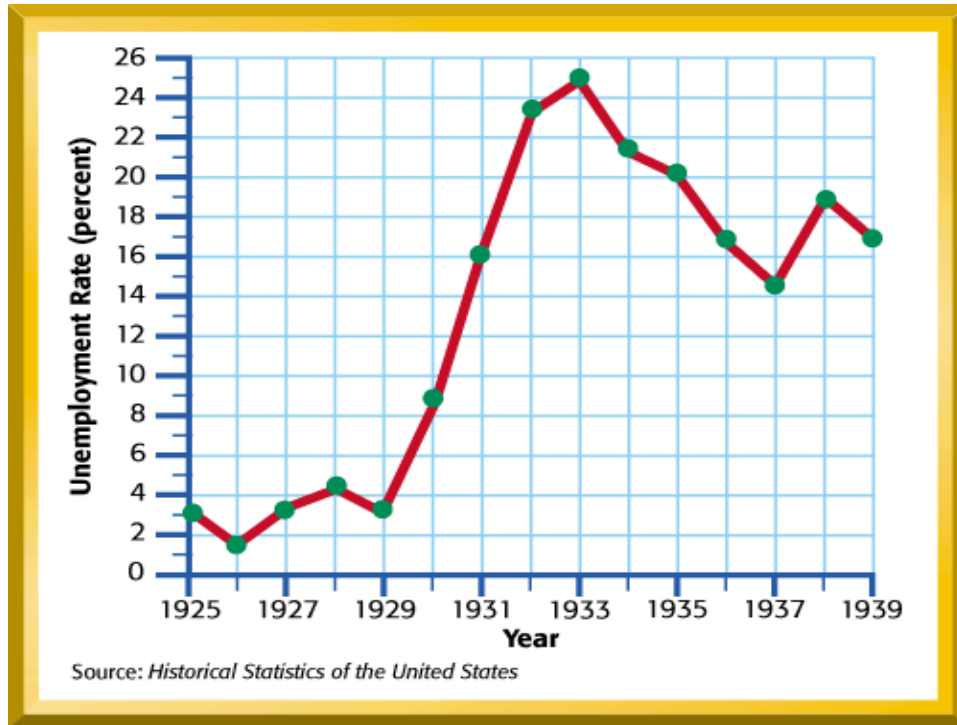
"I lugged . . . drafts and reams of paper home, night after night. . . . Sometimes I typed all night. . . . This was a good program. It got necessary work done. It gave teenagers a chance to work for pay. . . . It gave my mother relief from my necessary demands for money."

—*Helen Farmer, quoted in The Great Depression, by T. H. Watkins*

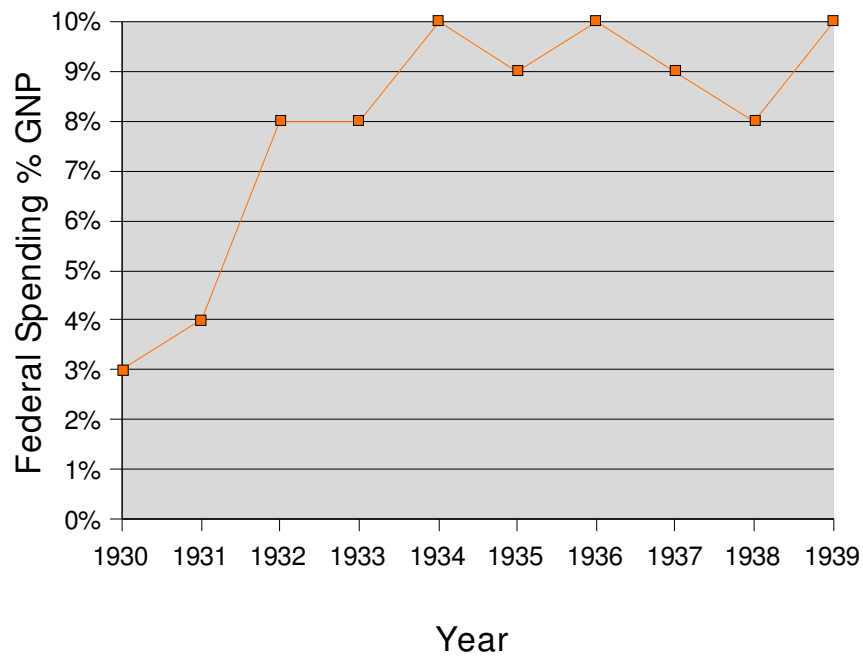
- In what way did the NYA program help Helen Farmer?

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Document 12



Federal Spending



- How did unemployment change between 1925 and 1939?
- What effect did federal spending have on the unemployment rate between 1930 and 1939?