I chose the time period of the New Deal, which while a time period in some regard, is broadly defined by the policies that Franklin D. Roosevelt implemented to get America out of the Great Depression. It really began in 1933 following FDR’s inauguration, and ended around 1939 (Library Of Congress, n.d.), though a huge chunk of the policies that would come from the New Deal came about in the president’s first one hundred days in office. The agencies that were established however, would continue to work for through the duration of the New Deal era, and help bring the country out of the depression. Among others it established the Works Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps to help provide work to the people (and in the same strike make the country better for the people as well), as well as the National Recovery Administration to help revitalize industry in the states. FDR also pushed for labor rights and the power of unions which also helps to shape the period as being distinct (Britannica, 2023). This was a huge switch up from the government that had previously believed in little intervention especially in the economy to this hugely involved government, the likes of which haven’t been seen to this day in my opinion. We have certainly come close but ultimately, I think this time period stands very distinct from the rest of America’s history. It was so radical, and effective that people in the progressive wing of the democratic party are begging for a new deal aimed at combatting climate change. It also offers a great deal of resources that can be studied and the nature of the CCC means that there are plenty of beautiful places to go to and learn about what it was like to make them, and the importance of doing so.

For my first resource I chose one of FDR’s fireside chats. I feel like these are a staple in any history class as I distinctly remember reading one at least twice throughout my education. I probably would pare it down to a page or two as the document I have is 13 pages long, and that is just too much to ask. So, I would just assign the first two pages to be read. First and foremost, I notice that this is a radio show done by FDR to the American people. He is trying to show that he is a populist, he is the president, but he is still one of us, and he serves us. It is a very noble cause and I think juxtaposes itself nicely against the previous administrations reluctance to get involved. Then of course I notice what the document is trying to accomplish, and what I think students may notice. The document seeks to explain what FDR has been up to, what it means for the American people, his reasoning for his actions, and to justify the new deals existence. I also think the students might wonder what he was trying to explain, if they didn’t already know, so I probably wouldn’t start out with this as an introductory lesson, rather it would follow a brief overview of what the New Deal was. I hope that the students might also notice that FDR in these first two pages is providing background to his actions to create a foundation that justifies the New Deals existence.

I would ask the students questions like:

Who was the audience that FDR was addressing?

How did it differ from past addresses by other Presidents, what are the implications of this?

What was Roosevelt seeking to accomplish in this chat?

Link to fireside chat: <https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/fireside-chat-recovery-program>

For my second resource I chose a political cartoon which focuses mainly on the NRA, but I think covers all bases of the New Deal, and nicely places them in history. It has two kids in cribs complaining about the New Deal saying, “Think of the mess of history this fellow Roosevelts cooking up for us to wade through in school” (it is the third comic on the pdf). What I see in the cartoon is a little bit of sarcasm about this will be a pain to study in history class, but (maybe the author would disagree with what I am about to say I couldn’t find much, but that is not my problem, death of the author and all that), ultimately this is a huge amount of history being made! It was rightly predicted that this would be studied in history class as a big unit because of how monumental the New Deal was. I also like the letter blocks strewn across the floor, which could represent the so-called alphabet soup of New Deal policies. I think Ben’s students would at least get that the author is alluding to this being a lot, I am confident that they could get deeper from the outset (that is the idea that this is a lot, but it is important and will be taught in history class).

I could ask questions like

What may have been the authors intended message?

Did he do a good job of conveying it?

What might a viewer take away from this image?

Link to document: <https://teachtnhistory.org/file/New%20Deal%20Political%20Cartoons.pdf>

For my third resource I chose a section from *A Young People’s History* by Rebecca Stefoff, I chose it over the regular APH because it focuses more on the New Deal whereas APH skips over it a little more to get to the war. I will include the reading I would have them do at the end of the document as it is too complicated to include here. I gather from the reading that while the New Deal helped a great deal of people (no pun intended), it ultimately left a lot of people out of that deal. This is of course the MO of government programs (see *When Affirmative Action was White*). The New Deal did a lot of good, funding the arts, getting the economy back on its feet, and providing jobs to a lot of Americans, but it is not without its criticisms, the same could be said for FDR. He could have included Black people and farmers in his New Deal but chose not to. He could have set a new precedent for how the government would treat Black people, but he did not. These are real choices he could have made, but for whatever reason he decided not to include them. Maybe he thought it would help the Deal stay afloat against criticism from conservatives, and the courts, but at the end of the day he still chose to exclude people from his Deal which was for Americans. I think the books lays this out enough that Ben’s Students could gather this upon reading the section. It doesn’t really beat around the bush on the matter.

I would ask them questions like:

Who is left out of the New Deal?

Why might they have been left out?

Do you think Roosevelt was right to exclude people, why or why not?

For my fourth resource I chose the video Crash Course US History #34: The new deal. I think it does a great overview of the New Deal. Crash Course is a great resource for quickly getting a lot of information to a viewer, though it is not without its failings. I think it is a great crutch to lean on when be, otherwise, it can be a great review source, or a great jumping off point. I think Green is very fair in his understanding of the New Deals role on the country and whether it really lifted the country out of the depression. I think, and if this is an advantage or otherwise is up to you, that Crash Course is a very upfront in what it presents. I appreciated that John brings out a quote by Eleanor as she is in my opinion a monumental figure in history but is often left out of discussion. I think this will lead students to fully recognize her importance (maybe not) in history and especially New Deal history. I also notice that Green seemingly alludes to the government helping you basically equates socialism. I don’t know if students would pick up on that, I think I would have, but I don’t think I am a fair representative. Truthfully, I struggle to perform analysis on a video like Crash Course, as I mentioned it is very straightforward video in my opinion, there is not much to gather that isn’t presented directly to the viewer on watching the video.

Do you agree with John’s conclusion?

With Eleanor Roosevelt in mind, what do you think was the role of women within the New Deal?

What were two of the bills passed and what did they do?

Video Link: <https://youtu.be/6bMq9Ek6jnA?si=Xf0GxudDaHCuCGHp>

For my fifth resource, I chose the Long Lake Group Camp in Yankee Springs which lies in between Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo. This is of course a campground, which I pretty regularly visited throughout high school. It has a lot of really cool trails and is just a blast to experience in my opinion. The site I am looking at does not offer which agency built it, but I was told it was a CCC project. I would love to take my students camping here as my teachers did for me. What sticks out to me, is that the New Deal was strictly focused on making as much money as possible, FDR understood that offering leisure activities is beneficial to life. The camp surely does not bring in a lot of wealth, but it is an amazing way to connect with nature (and a great place to go winter camping). This is also evident in the arts projects that the New Deal sponsored. I think students would understand that it was the New Deal that brought us this campsite, but they might miss what I noticed above.

Who built this park? How does that make you feel?

Should the government be expected to provide goods and services like this?

What other services do you think the government should provide?

Link to site: <https://livingnewdeal.org/map/>

For my sixth resource I chose the website Living New Deal. It is essentially a website that contains tons of information relating to the New Deal I really like this site as it not only contains the common overview of the New Deal but also has tons of other resources related to it, including (but not limited to!) timelines, maps, and videos. I especially like the map section as it relates to the field trip section, but it also shows that the New Deal stretched across the country. It impacted so many people in so many places. To me this really goes to show that there was truly nothing like the New Deal, nothing was so far reaching, and impacted people on such a personal level. I ended up using this site to inform a lot of my previous resources. I think students would probably miss that at first glance, they would instead just focus on how much information there is to digest. I really do think that Students would be able to get a lot out of this website, that is of course, if they really spent the time to find it. It would be a great source for a project on the topic of New Deal, which I imagine a student who is thinking of doing a project would recognize. It ultimately is pretty low on the search result, though that in my opinion is more a fault of the search engine but I digress.

What is one thing you have learned from this website?

How big was the New Deal?

What were some of the services it provided?

Website URL: <https://livingnewdeal.org/>

For my seventh, and final resource I am going to be asking my students to ask their parents/grandparents/neighbors/guardians how the new deal may have impacted them, and how the government has impacted them. I will phrase it as something along the lines of “find someone in your life who has been impacted by the government”, the goal here is that the students may assume this is a challenging task, but in reality, I am hoping that they soon figure out that government, and government spending programs impact just about, if not, everyone! I am really hoping that if the students didn’t already know that which I think some will, that they come to realize that after completing the activity. I think if the people the students talk to are able to connect the dots either to services like social security, or to works projects that were put on by the New Deal, that the students will begin to understand just how prevalent the New Deal, and its policies are even to this day.

How hard was it to find someone impacted by governmental programs?

What did you learn from them?

Do you think the government should be expected to provide services for its constituents?

I think there are a lot of great ideas and themes that can come from the New Deal. The ones I would want my students to really latch on to are ideas like how government spending can help you, and if that is something they believe in. I think this would be clearly made evident in hopefully all the tasks, but especially resources like the website, the field trip, and the at home activity, among the others as well. I would be curious to see how it plays out in relation to whether or not they think the New Deal got America out of the Great Depression. In that instance I think the video does a great job of bringing them to a fair conclusion. I also think the topic of who is missing from history is a great idea to tie into this lesson (though honestly should it not go in every lesson?). The book, and the video do a great job of incorporating these, as does the website. The field trip and at home activity can be excellent to see how government impacts you and those you know, and how the New Deal specifically helped build resources that the students can rely on. Of course all sources lend themselves particularly well to understanding ideas, and hopefully critical thinking, but if I had to choose a specific resource for that I would certainly pick the political comic, as it has no real answer per se, rather it will ultimately be up to the student to interpret and determine the meaning of. I think the New Deal is a great way of getting these ideas across to students as it is both very broad, both temporally and in its scope, but also precise in its examples.

(here is how I would assign the reading):

Start at section Struggling to Survive, and read the next 4 paragraphs, skip to the next page and read the paragraph starting with “Black farmers were hit very hard by the Depression”, also read the quote that follows.

(Citations listed for Zotero Bib generation)

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(CrashCourse, 2013)

(*Yankee Springs Recreation Area*, 2022)

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