

Chapters 25 & 26 Overview

Main Themes:

1. That neither the efforts of local and private relief agencies nor the early volunteerism of Herbert Hoover were able to halt the spiral of rising unemployment and declining production.
2. How the economic pressures of the depression affected the American people, especially minorities.
3. How the misery of those affected by the depression swept Franklin Delano Roosevelt into the presidencyHow Franklin Roosevelt, although limited by his basically traditional economic views, pushed through programs of economic planning and depression relief.
4. How popular protests against New Deal policies from rightists, leftists, and those who defied categorization inspired Roosevelt to launch a new burst of action known as the Second New Deal.
5. That, despite Roosevelt's overwhelming reelection in 1936, the New Deal was virtually moribund by 1938, thanks to increasing conservative opposition, his own political blunders, and continued hard times.
6. That the New Deal helped give rise to a new role for the national government as a "broker state" among various organized interests.

Objectives: [You should be able to explain each of these in some detail]

1. The problems of unemployment and the inadequacy of relief.
2. The particular problems of farmers in the Dust Bowl.
3. The impact of the depression on minorities.
4. The impact of the depression on working women and the American family.
5. The reflection of the economic crisis in American culture.
6. President Herbert Hoover's plan for fighting the Depression.
7. The series of emergency measures designed to restore confidence that were enacted during the first 100 days.
8. The New Deal programs for raising farm prices and promoting industrial recovery.
9. The first federal efforts at regional planning.
10. The New Deal program for reforming the financial system.
11. The federal relief programs and Social Security.
12. The political pressures from both the left and the right that caused Franklin Roosevelt to move in new directions from 1935 on.
13. The changes in organized labor during the New Deal period.
14. The effects of the court-packing scheme and the recession of 1937 and 1938 on Roosevelt and the New Deal.
15. The impact of the New Deal on minorities and women.
16. The lasting significance of the New Deal to the American economy, political system, and popular culture.

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Assignment 1

Sources: pg. 672 to top of pg. 678; end of pg. 685 to pg. 689.

Questions:

1. What was the immediate economic impact of the Great Depression on the lives of average Americans in the cities? in the towns? on the farms?
2. How effective were local, state, and private relief agencies in meeting the ravages of widespread unemployment?
3. What impact did the Great Depression have on the availability of jobs for women? on the lives of children? on African-Americans? on Hispanic-Americans?
4. How did families adjust to the pressures of life during the Depression?
5. Describe the characteristics of the Dust Bowl. Where was it centered?
6. Why can it be said that the causes of the Dust Bowl had as much to do with people as with nature? What partially solved the problem?
7. What did President Hoover mean by the term "rugged individualism?" How did this reflect his views about the role of government?
8. Describe the significance of voluntarism in the Hoover administration's approach to easing the nation's suffering during the Great Depression.
9. How were shantytowns, soup kitchens, and bread lines a response to the Depression? How successful were they?
10. What was Hoover's new approach to the Depression after mid-1931? What caused this shift in emphasis?
11. How successful were the government projects initiated by President Hoover?
12. Why did so many men leave their homes during the Depression? Where did they go?
13. How did the case of the Scottsboro Boys illustrate the power of racism in the continuing conflict between federal and states' rights?
14. How did Hoover's handling of the veterans' Bonus March affect his popularity and re-electability?
15. What made Franklin D. Roosevelt such an attractive presidential candidate for the Democrats in 1932? Why did he win the 1932 election?
16. What happened in the months between Roosevelt's election and his inauguration?

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Assignment 2

Sources: pg. 693 to end of pg. 700.

Questions:

1. Why was FDR's administration labeled the "New Deal?" What were its three goals?
2. What sort of relationship did President Roosevelt develop with the press and the public?
3. What role did the radio play in Depression-era America?
4. Why did FDR engage in a series of "Fireside Chats" with the American people?
5. Why was banking the new president's number one order of business when he came into office? What was done immediately and in 1934 and 1935?
6. What did the Economy Act of 1933 reveal about Roosevelt's fundamental economic philosophy?
7. What was the principal feature of New Deal farm policy? How well did it work? Which farmers were best served?
8. What were the goals and concepts of the NRA? Why was it less than fully successful? How did it end?
9. What were the goals of the TVA? How well did it meet those goals?
10. What effect did taking the nation off the gold standard have on the economy?
11. How did the New Deal try to reform the banking and securities industries?
12. How did the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) help the states?
13. What assumption about relief was reflected in the CWA and the CC? What was unique about the CCC?
14. What was done for mortgage relief?
15. Briefly characterize the ideas of Dr. Francis Townsend, Father Charles Coughlin, and Senator Huey P. Long (D-LA). Who was probably the most important [to the president] among them and why?
16. How did FDR respond to his critics?
17. How successful were the socialists and communists in exploiting the unrest caused by the Great Depression?
18. What role did Mrs. Roosevelt play in her husband's administration?
19. How did FDR change the role of the federal government during his first term as president?

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Assignment 3

Sources: end of pg. 700 to mid-pg. 715.

Questions:

1. What 1935 legislative initiatives signaled the emergence of the "Second" New Deal? To what extent were its acts reactions to political agitation and Supreme Court rulings?
2. Compare and contrast craft unionism and industrial unionism. Why did the AFL and CIO split in 1937?
3. Why did organized labor become more militant in the 1930s?
4. What were the major provisions of the Wagner Act of 1935? Why could it be called the "Magna Carta of Labor?"
5. Identify the three areas covered by the original Social Security Act of 1935.
6. How did the Social Security Act try to maintain a distinction between "insurance" and "public assistance?" Why might it be considered the most important achievement of the entire New Deal?
7. Describe the Works Progress Administration and its accomplishments.
8. What New Deal programs supported artists and writers in the 1930s? Why did the New Deal further these programs?
9. What were the themes of the plays, books, and paintings/murals of this period?
10. How did the literature of the time reflect the issues of the Great Depression?
11. What were the main benefits of government support for art and literature in the 1930s?
12. What were the elements of the "New Deal political coalition" that propelled FDR to a landslide victory in the 1936 presidential election? How did he interpret this victory?
13. What did the popularity of superheroes, particularly Superman, reveal about American culture in the late 1930s and early 1940s?
14. Why did FDR "pack" the Supreme Court? What were the political repercussions of this episode?
15. Why did industrial production drop again and unemployment go up once more in 1937? What economic theory appeared to have been supported by the recession and the administration's response to it?
16. What is meant by the "broker state?" How did the New Deal create it?
17. How did the New Deal discriminate against African-Americans?
18. Why was FDR never fully committed to full civil rights for African-Americans?
19. Why did African-Americans support the New Deal?
20. What new direction in Indian policy did the Roosevelt administration take? What were the results of this new policy?
21. How did the New Deal change the American West?
22. What pushed the New Deal toward a greater role for women? What held it back?
23. Why was the New Deal over, in reality, by 1939?>
24. Why did one leading historian call the New Deal a "halfway revolution?" Does this characterization still ring true in light of the work of later historians?