

The Great Depression in South

Introduction:

The devastation of the Civil War left the economy of the South in ruins. By the early 1930's the South still lagged far behind the rest of the nation. President Roosevelt viewed the economic imbalance in the South as the "nation's No. 1 economic problem."

Guiding Questions:

What were conditions like in the South during the Great Depression?

How did the New Deal seek to change these conditions?

Learning Objectives:

The learner will analyze primary and secondary sources to determine what conditions were like in the South during the Great Depression.

The learner will demonstrate knowledge of conditions in the South by curating a display of one artifact and one image and creating a caption.



Materials Needed:

Collection of Artifacts: industrial bobbin, coal miner's lamp, flat iron, hoe, glass electrical insulators, rug beater, slates, washboard, vintage doll, aluminum ice tray, cooking pot, tin pan, vintage car horn

Image collection from Library of Congress (Attached to lesson plan)

[Franklin Roosevelt's Message to the Conference on Economic Conditions in the South, July 4, 1938](#)

Background Reading:

[Report on economic conditions of the South](#)

Writing Prompt:

What do the image and artifact tell us about the Great Depression or the New Deal in the South?

Lesson Activities:

Activity 1- Roosevelt's Message to the Conference on Economic Conditions in the South

Whole Class Activity

Ask students to read Roosevelt's message. Students should concentrate on the third full paragraph that begins with "Without going into the long history..." Ask students to underline or highlight the key problems facing the South. Discuss the key ideas students' identify.

Activity 2 – Artifacts and Images



Option 1: Small Group Activity

Set artifacts on a table in front of the classroom. Give each student a photograph from the collection and ask the students to match the photograph with an artifact. Next, students should write a short caption that explains what the artifact and image tell us about the problems in the South during the Great Depression or the solutions offered by the New Deal. Give students the opportunity to present their collection and caption to the class.

Option 2: Partner Activity for 20 or more students

Give each student one artifact **or** image. Have students find a person with a complementary image or artifact. Students should work together to write a caption that explains what the artifact and image tell us about the problems in the South during the Great Depression or the solutions offered by the New Deal. Give students the opportunity to present their collection and caption to the class.

Assessment: The writing prompt will be used to assess mastery of the lesson. You may choose to assess formally by having students submit their captions on paper or assess informally during the student presentations

Extending the Lesson:

1. Have students read pages 25-28 of the [Report on Economic Conditions of the South](#) concerning education in the Southern states. Ask students to research the state of education in the South today? Have the Southern states resolved the educational problems identified in 1938? Why or why not?



Franklin Roosevelt's Message to the Conference on Economic Conditions in the South

To the Conference on Economic Conditions of the South:

No purpose is closer to my heart at this moment than that which caused me to call you to Washington. That purpose is to obtain a statement—or, perhaps, I should say a re-statement as of today—of the economic conditions of the South, a picture of the South in relation to the rest of the country, in order that we may do something about it: in order that we may not only carry forward the work that has been begun toward the rehabilitation of the South, but that the program of such work may be expanded in the directions that this new presentation will indicate.

My intimate interest in all that concerns the South is, I believe, known to all of you, but this interest is far more than a sentimental attachment born of a considerable residence in your section and of close personal friendship with so many of your people. It proceeds even more from my feeling of responsibility toward the whole nation. It is my conviction that the South presents right now the nation's No. 1 economic problem—the nation's problem, not merely the South's. For we have an economic unbalance in the nation as a whole, due to this very condition of the South.

It is an unbalance that can and must be righted, for the sake of the South and of the nation.

Without going into the long history of how this situation came to be—the long and ironic history of the despoiling of this truly American section of the country's population—suffice it for the immediate purpose to get a clear perspective of the task that is presented to us. That task embraces the wasted or neglected resources of land and water, the abuses suffered by the soil, the need for cheap fertilizer and cheap power; the problems presented by the population itself—a population still holding the great heritages of King's Mountain and Shiloh—the problems presented by the South's capital resources and the absentee ownership of those resources, and problems growing out of the new industrial era and, again, of absentee ownership of the new industries. There is the problem of labor and employment in the South and the related problem of protecting women and children in this field. There is the problem of farm ownership, of which farm tenancy is a part, and of farm income. There are questions of taxation, of education, of housing, and of health.

More and more definitely in recent years those in the South who have sought selflessly to evaluate the elements constituting the general problem have come to agree on certain basic factors. I have asked Mr. Mellett to present for your consideration a statement of these factors as prepared by various departments of the Government. I ask you to consider this statement critically, in the light of your own general or specific knowledge, in order that it may be made representative of the South's own best thought and that it may be presented to Congress and the public as such.

I had hoped to attend your meeting and listen to your discussions. Unhappily, other pressing work makes this impossible. Please accept my sincere regret that I cannot be with you and be assured that I anticipate with deep interest the result of your labors.

Citation: Franklin D. Roosevelt: "Message to the Conference on Economic Conditions of the South.," July 4, 1938. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.



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Top: Lange, Dorothea, photographer. *Berry pickers at 5 a.m. Waiting for the truck to haul them to work. Earn about sixty cents per day. Memphis, Tennessee. Memphis Shelby County Tennessee, 1938. June. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/fsa200001713/PP/>. (Accessed July 18, 2017.)*

Bottom: Rothstein, Arthur, photographer. *The temporary home of a migrant citrus worker and his family. Now camped near the packing plant of Winterhaven, Florida. The family is originally from Tennessee. Florida Winterhaven, 1937. Jan. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/fsa1998019987/PP/>. (Accessed July 18, 2017.)*

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United States Resettlement Administration, Mydans, Carl, photographer. *Family of nine living in open field in rough board covering built on old Ford truck chassis on U.S. Route 70, between Bruceton and Camden, Tennessee. Their water supply was an open creek running near highway. Bruceton Tennessee, 1936. Mar. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/fsa1997001623/PP/>. (Accessed July 18, 2017.)*



United States Resettlement Administration, Mydans, Carl, photographer. *Oldest boy of family of nine, seventeen years old, claims two years schooling; living with his family in open field, on U.S. Route 70 between Camden and Bruceton, Tennessee. Tennessee, 1936. Mar. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/fsa1997001635/PP/>. (Accessed July 18, 2017.)*





Rothstein, Arthur, photographer. *Knox County, Tennessee Tennessee Valley Authority TVA. Mrs. Wiegel uses electric vacuum cleaner.* Knox County Tennessee, 1942. June. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/owi2001006295/PP/>. (Accessed July 18, 2017.)



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Lange, Dorothea, photographer. American River camp, Sacramento. Home of Tennessee family, now migratory workers. Seven in family, came to California July 1935, following relatives who had come in 1933. Father was a coal miner in Tennessee. Reason for coming to California. "Our neighbors were coming. We only got one or two days work a week relief. Thought we could make it better here." Since arrival family has worked in walnuts, tomatoes, peaches, and the mother has worked in a fruit cannery. California Sacramento Sacramento County, 1936. Nov. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/fsa1998021895/PP1/>. (Accessed July 18, 2017.)





United States Resettlement Administration, Mydans, Carl, photographer. *Twelve-year old girl of family of nine, cooking meal in rude, open lean-to near hut, Tennessee.* Tennessee, 1936. Mar. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/fsa1997001639/PP/>. (Accessed July 18, 2017.)





Left: Lee, Russell, photographer. *Southeast Missouri Farms. Daughter of sharecropper with doll on kitchen in shack home.* Missouri New Madrid County Southeast Missouri Farms, 1938. May. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/fsa2000012353/PP/>. (Accessed July 18, 2017.)

Right: Lee, Russell, photographer. *Doll and furniture after the flood. Maunie, Illinois.* Illinois Maunie White County, 1937. Feb. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/fsa1998022179/PP/>. (Accessed July 18, 2017.)



Left Lee, Russell, photographer. *New Madrid County, Missouri. Child of sharecropper getting drink of water in kitchen of shack.* Missouri New Madrid County Southeast Missouri Farms, 1938. May. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/fsa2000012338/PP/>. (Accessed July 18, 2017.)

Right Lee, Russell, photographer. *Southeast Missouri Farms. Child of sharecropper reaching for pan on stove in living room at shack home.* Missouri New Madrid County Southeast Missouri Farms, 1938. May. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/fsa2000012336/PP/>. (Accessed July 18, 2017.)





Hine, Lewis Wickes, photographer. *Two of the tiny workers, a raveler and a looper in Loudon Hosiery Mills.* Location: Loudon, Tennessee. Loudon Tennessee, 1910. December. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/ncl2004002560/PP/>. (Accessed July 18, 2017.)





Hine, Lewis Wickes, photographer. *Hard work and dangerous for such a young boy. James O'Dell, a greaser and coupler on the tiple of the Cross Mountain Mine, Knoxville Iron Co., in the vicinity of Coal Creek, Tenn. James has been there four months. Helps push these heavily loaded cars. Appears to be about 12 or 13 years old.* Location: Coal Creek, Tennessee. Coal Creek Tennessee, 1910. December. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/ncl2004002591/PP/>. (Accessed July 18, 2017.)





Rothstein, Arthur, photographer. *Norris Dam, Tennessee*. Norris Dam Tennessee, 1942. Jan. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/fsa1997013347/PP1>. (Accessed July 18, 2017.)18, 2017.)





Rothstein, Arthur, photographer. Lauderdale County, Alabama. Tennessee Valley Authority TVA. Julien Case testing soil on his farm. Alabama Lauderdale County, 1942. June. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/owi2001006180/PP/>. (Accessed July 18, 2017.)





Rothstein, Arthur, photographer. *Knox County, Tennessee Tennessee Valley Authority TVA. Learning to use an electric iron at Farragut Agricultural School. Knox County Tennessee, 1942. June. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/owi2001006383/PP/>. (Accessed July 18, 2017.)*





Rothstein, Arthur, photographer. *Knox County, Tennessee Tennessee Valley Authority TVA. Girls are shown how to operate an electric refrigerator at the Farragut Agricultural School. Knox County Tennessee, 1942. June. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/owi2001006276/PP/>. (Accessed July 18, 2017.)*

