



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum



Dorothea Lange, September 1939.

## *"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## Table of Contents

<b>Curriculum Guide Objectives</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>What Does It Mean to Think Historically?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>How are Historical Records Helpful in Teaching?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Overview: The Farm Security Administration</b>	<b>5</b>
Photographer Biographies	
Geographic Regions	
The Skull Controversy	
The Photo Project Goes to War	
Saving the FSA Photographs	
Photographs as Historic Evidence	
<b>Overview: The Great Depression</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Overview: The New Deal</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Thumbnails: FSA Photographs</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Related Documents</b>	<b>32</b>
FDR's Inaugural Address	
Stryker's Shoot Scripts	
<b>Vocabulary</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Teaching Activities and Assignments</b>	<b>37</b>
History Activities	
Fine Arts Activities	
Civics, Citizenship, and Government Activities	
Writing and Journalism Activities	
Geography Activities	
Hands-on Learning Activities	
Photograph Analysis Worksheet	
Document Analysis Worksheet	
Map Template	



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## Curriculum Guide Objectives

The purpose of this curriculum guide is to provide material aimed at meeting two goals. The first is to help students gain an understanding of the difficult living conditions faced by Americans during the Great Depression, and the government's effort to document the problems. The second is to familiarize students with the use of primary sources, and to train them in using document-based historical research techniques. Interpreting historical documents and photographs helps students gain a better understanding of history as the rich tapestry that it is, rather than a series of loosely connected facts, dates, and events. It also helps them to develop and refine their critical thinking skills.

Students will learn that a primary source is a record created by someone who participated in, or who had first-hand knowledge of an event. Examples of primary sources include letters, reports, diary entries, maps, drawings, newspaper and magazine articles, sound recordings, films and videos, artifacts, and photographs. The exhibition entitled *"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression* at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum uses photographs as primary sources presenting documentary evidence of the hardships of life during the Great Depression.

### General Objectives: Document Based Questions

When students have successfully completed the exercises included in this packet they should be able to examine a primary source and

- identify factual information;
- identify points of view;
- gather, arrange and evaluate information;
- compare and contrast information;
- draw conclusions;
- prepare, present and defend arguments.

### Specific Objectives: The Great Depression

Students should also be able to

- identify specific challenges faced by people during the Great Depression;
- describe the living conditions endured by people during the Great Depression;
- empathize with people facing major economic difficulties;
- explain the attitudes and values of people living under duress;
- compare and contrast conditions in the various regions of the United States.



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## What Does It Mean to Think Historically?

In order to really understand history, students need to *think historically*. They have to be taught the mental skills needed to not just ingest and regurgitate “facts,” but to *examine*, *evaluate*, and *understand* history. Thinking historically requires a complex set of skills similar to those used by a detective trying to solve a mystery.

These skills include:

**Finding Evidence:** The first step to understanding history is to know where to find the photographs, documents, and artifacts that tell the story of the time, place, people, and events under examination.

**Classifying and Categorizing:** Organizing bits of information from both primary and secondary sources in a manner that reveals a broader story is an important skill.

**Checking and Cross Checking:** Information must be checked and then rechecked in order to build a contextual understanding. This is called corroboration. Special attention must be paid to make sure that information is both valid and reliable.

**Identifying Sub-Texts:** Are there political, social, economic, cultural or other sub-texts at play?

**Constructing a Viable Interpretation of Events:** What “story” does the information seem to tell? Is this a plausible account of what may have happened?

**Filling in the Blanks:** Sometimes historians must fill in the gaps when specific evidence does not exist. Great care must be taken to do so in a way that does not introduce excessive bias or contemporary beliefs and attitudes. Historic events must be viewed within the context and attitudes of their own time. However, no matter how pure the intentions, interpretation is always tainted by the assumptions and prejudices of the interpreter.

**Promoting and Arguing your Point:** Once a plausible story has developed, it needs to be told so that it can be examined and scrutinized by outside, objective sources.



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## How are Historical Records Helpful in Teaching?

Historical records are useful to teachers in a variety of ways. They help students learn to:

- interpret
- explain
- apply
- clarify
- analyze
- evaluate
- assess
- describe
- form opinions
- empathize
- identify
- compare and contrast
- develop self-knowledge
- establish perspective
- identify contradictions
- determine what is accepted as fact and what is rejected as fiction
- draw conclusions
- weigh generalizations
- recognize multiple interpretations
- examine evidence
- analyze raw data
- develop confidence in their ability to gather information
- draw upon visual, literary and musical sources
- develop a sense of excitement about learning about history

These skills can be developed or enhanced by those who participate in document-based learning programs. In addition to skill development, students find working with objects and documents to be fun and exciting. Teachers often have the same reaction.



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## Overview: The Farm Security Administration

For those born after the 1930s, the Great Depression is something that can be visualized only through photography and film. Certain images have come to define our view of that uncertain time: an anxious migrant mother with her three small children; a farmer and his sons struggling through a dust storm; a family of sharecroppers gathered outside their spartan home. These photographs are icons of an era.

Remarkably, many of these familiar images were created by one small government agency established by Franklin Roosevelt: the Farm Security Administration (FSA). Between 1935 and 1943, FSA photographers produced nearly eighty thousand pictures of life in Depression-era America. This remains the largest documentary photography project of a people ever undertaken.

President Roosevelt created the Farm Security Administration (FSA) in 1937 to aid poor farmers, sharecroppers, tenant farmers and migrant workers. It developed out of an earlier New Deal agency called the Resettlement Administration (RA). The FSA resettled poor farmers on more productive land, promoted soil conservation, provided emergency relief and loaned money to help farmers buy and improve farms. It built experimental rural communities, suburban "Greenbelt towns" and sanitary camps for migrant farm workers.

One of the New Deal's most progressive—and controversial—agencies, the Farm Security Administration (FSA) advocated government planning and economic intervention to improve living conditions in rural America. Conservative critics attacked the FSA and its predecessor, the Resettlement Administration (RA), as "socialistic."

To defend and promote the Resettlement Administration director Rexford Tugwell created a publicity department to document rural poverty and government efforts to alleviate it. It included a photographic unit with an odd name—the "Historical Section." In 1937, the RA and its Historical Section were merged into the newly created FSA.

Tugwell chose Roy Stryker, a college economics instructor, to run the Historical Section. Though not a photographer, Stryker successfully directed an extraordinary group of men and women who today comprise a virtual "Who's Who" of twentieth century documentary photography. Many later forged careers that helped define photojournalism at magazines like *Life* and *Look*.

The FSA photographic unit was not a "jobs program" like the New Deal's Federal Arts Project. Photographers were hired solely for their skills. Most were in their twenties or thirties. They traveled the nation on assignments that could last for months.





# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## Farm Security Administration Director

**Roy Emerson Stryker (1893-1975)**  
RA/FSA, 1935-1943

"I never took a picture and yet I felt a part of every picture taken. . . . I sat in my office in Washington and yet I went into every home in America."

-Roy Stryker, 1973



Roy Stryker was a 42-year-old economics instructor at Columbia University when he accepted Rexford Tugwell's offer to direct the Resettlement Administration's new photographic unit, which became part of the Farm Security Administration in 1937.

Stryker encouraged his photographers to read about regions and people they were photographing and often gave them "shooting scripts" describing assignment themes.

A savvy bureaucrat, he fought to preserve the photo unit's funding and arranged its preservation as part of the Library of Congress. Stryker remained head of the unit until it was dissolved in 1943.



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## Photographer Biographies

### Arthur Rothstein (1915-1985)

RA/FSA, 1935-1940

New York City native Arthur Rothstein met Roy Stryker while an undergraduate at Columbia University, where Stryker was then an instructor. In 1935 Stryker invited the twenty-year-old to join him at the newly formed federal photo project.



Rothstein became one of FSA's most productive photographers. He left the agency in 1940 to join the staff of *Look* magazine where—with the exception of wartime service with the U.S. Army Signal Corps—he remained until 1971 when the magazine folded. He was later director of photography at *Parade* magazine.

### Walker Evans (1903-1975)

RA, 1935-1937

One of America's pre-eminent photographers, Walker Evans created many of his most memorable images while working for Roy Stryker's photo unit.



Born into a well-to-do Midwestern family, Evans left college to pursue an artist's life. In 1928 he turned to photography. By the mid-1930s he had exhibited his work at New York's Museum of Modern Art. He was among the first photographers hired to work for the Historical Section.

During a leave from the photo unit, he and writer James Agee spent a month living with three Alabama sharecropper families. Their classic 1941 book about these families, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, featured photographs by Evans.

Evans later worked for *Time* and *Fortune* magazines. He was a professor of graphic design at Yale University from 1965 until his death.





# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## **Carl Mydans (1907-2004)**

RA, 1935-1936

After graduating from the Boston University in 1930, Carl Mydans worked as a reporter for a small New York City newspaper, often carrying a camera with him.

He joined Roy Stryker's new photo unit in 1935 and left a year later to join the staff of a new photo magazine—*Life*. During World War II he was a photo reporter for *Life* in Europe, China and the Philippines and spent part of the war as a prisoner of the Japanese. Mydans later created memorable photographs of the Korean War and had a distinguished international career in photojournalism.



## **Dorothea Lange (1895-1965)**

RA/FSA, 1935-1939

Born in Hoboken, New Jersey, Dorothea Lange's father abandoned the family when she was twelve and polio left her with a lifelong limp. She developed an early fascination with photography and in 1918 moved to San Francisco and established herself as a portrait photographer.

During the Great Depression, she abandoned studio portraiture and began documenting the lives of struggling Americans. In 1935 she joined Roy Stryker's photo unit.



Though Lange's work includes many of the FSA's most memorable photographs, she had an unsettled career at the agency. Eventually, budget constraint and friction between Lange and Stryker led him to reduce her role to occasional contract work. She was terminated in 1939.

During World War II, Lange worked for other government agencies. Later, though hampered by illness, she photographed for *Life* and other publications and occasionally taught photography.



# Curriculum Guide

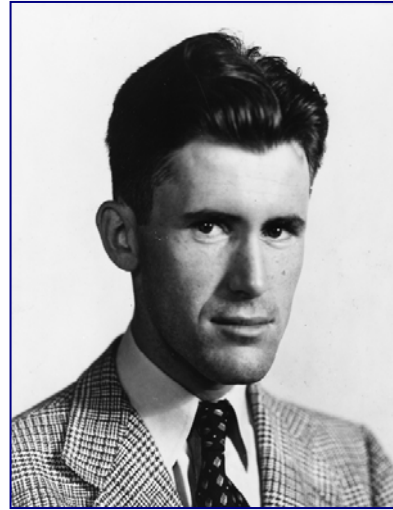
*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## **John Vachon (1914-1975)**

RA/FSA, 1936-1943

John Vachon began working for the photo unit as a messenger. Several months later he borrowed a camera "just to see what I could do with it." The Minnesota native became one of the FSA's most prolific photographers. Stryker, he recalled, "made a photographer out of me."

Vachon remained with the photo unit until it was disbanded in 1943. After military service during World War II, he began a long photographic career at *Look* magazine.



## **Russell Lee (1903-1986)**

RA/FSA, 1936-1942

Russell Lee was educated as a chemical engineer. After attending an exhibition of FSA photographs, he thought, "I ought to meet these people." When Carl Mydans resigned from the photo unit in 1936 to join *Life* magazine, Stryker replaced him with Lee.

He was known for his photo series work and his skill at interior lighting led to many distinctive photographs.

After serving as a photographer in the Army's Air Transport Command during World War II, Lee worked as a photographer for the government and private industry, including work for Roy Stryker at Standard Oil. He taught Photography at the University of Missouri and University of Texas.





# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## **Jack Delano (1914-1997)**

FSA, 1940-1942

When he was a child, Jack Delano's family emigrated from Kiev to Philadelphia. He studied painting at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and worked as a commercial photographer on the side.

In 1939, he produced a series of photographs about Pennsylvania coal miners for the New Deal's Federal Arts Program, which led Stryker to hire him for the photo unit in 1940.



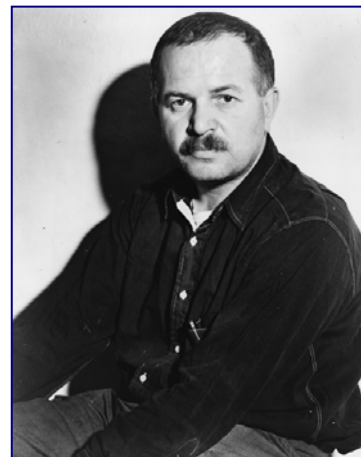
An assignment in Puerto Rico led to a lifelong fascination with the island and its people. He moved there after serving in the Army Air Corps during World War II. During his eclectic career, he worked as a photographer, composer of symphonic music, creator of illustrated children's books, and director of Puerto Rico's radio and TV network.

## **Ben Shahn (1898-1969)**

RA/FSA, 1935-1938

Though best remembered as a painter, muralist and graphic artist, Ben Shahn produced distinctive photography for the FSA during the 1930's.

Shahn's family emigrated from Lithuania in 1906. Apprenticed to a lithographer at age fifteen, he took college and art classes at night and had his first one-man show in New York City in 1930. His art expressed his deeply felt social liberalism.



During the 1930s Shahn created murals and posters for the New Deal's Federal Art Project and other federal agencies. He found photography a useful tool "to make notes for future paintings." Yet Shahn's photographic eye was distinctive and perceptive.

He did little photography after leaving the FSA. In 1939, he and his family moved to a cooperative community built by the resettlement Administration called Jersey Homesteads (now Roosevelt, New Jersey), where he lived for the rest of his life.



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## **Gordon Parks (1912- )** FSA, 1942-1943

In the late 1930s Gordon Parks bought a \$7.50 camera and taught himself to use it.

While working as a fashion photographer in the Midwest, he met FSA photographer Jack Delano. With Delano's encouragement, he resolved to join the agency. A foundation grant paid for his salary.



As the photo unit's only African American photographer, Parks later recalled that Roy Stryker was initially reluctant to hire him because the photo unit's lab personnel were hostile to the appointment of a black photographer.

In 1943 Parks joined the Office of War Information, where he created memorable photographs of the home front during World War II. He later worked again for Stryker at the Standard Oil Company. Parks has forged a distinguished career as a photographer, painter, author, composer and pioneering black filmmaker. He lives in New York City.

## **Marion Post Wolcott (1910-1990)** FSA, 1938-1941

The daughter of a prosperous New Jersey family, Marion Post got her first lessons in photography while studying abroad in Vienna in 1933. She had an established career and was a staff photographer at the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* when she convinced Roy Stryker to hire in 1938.

Post developed a warm relationship with Stryker and was strongly committed to the photo project. During her years at the FSA, she often traveled alone for long periods through remote areas of the nation.



In 1941 Post married Lee Wolcott, a federal agriculture official, and resigned from the FSA. Though she occasionally took photographs in later years, she never again devoted herself full-time to professional photography.





# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## Geographic Regions

### The Great Plains and the Southwest



The most enduring image of rural America during the Great Depression is one of dust and human migration. This image was formed in the nation's heartland, where the people of the Great Plains and Southwest suffered both natural and economic disasters during the 1930s.

Decades of intensive farming and inattention to soil conservation had left this region ecologically vulnerable. A long drought that began in the early 1930s triggered a disaster. The winds that sweep across the plains carried away its dry, depleted topsoil in enormous "dust storms." Dramatic and frightening, the dust storms turned day into night as they destroyed farms. The hardest hit area—covering parts of Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico and the Texas Panhandle—was nicknamed the "Dust Bowl."

FSA photographers recorded the hardships that drought, economic depression and low crop prices created throughout the Great Plains and Southwest. They documented the plight of farm families forced to abandon the land and join the ranks of migrant workers toiling for low wages on distant commercial farms. The migrant flow out of the region included people from cities and small towns and farm laborers who'd been replaced by motorized farm machinery.



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## California and the Far West



For thousands of struggling rural people in the Great Plains and Southwest, California represented hope. During the 1910s and 1920s, some began traveling to California and other Far Western states in search of work. When the Depression hit, news of jobs picking crops on the state's large commercial farms swelled the migration. Hundreds of thousands of people packed their belongings into cars and trucks and headed west.

Most found more hardship at the end of their long journey. The new arrivals, dubbed "Oakies" or "Arkies," often struggled to find employment. Wages were low and living conditions abysmal. Many migrants were crowded into shanty towns or squalid "ditchback camps"—unsanitary housing located along irrigation ditches.

The Farm Security Administration tried to assist migrant farm workers by creating clean residential camps with running water and simple, sturdy living quarters. The camps were organized democratically and governed by the residents. They became islands of stability for migrants enduring grinding poverty and dislocation. In John Steinbeck's 1939 novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, the Joad family spends time in a government-run migrant camp.





# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## The South



Long before the Great Depression, the South was marked by deep poverty. Largely rural and agricultural, it was home to millions of tenant farmers and sharecroppers. In exchange for cash rent (or, for sharecroppers, a portion of the crop), they farmed the fields of large landowners.

Even in good times, life for these workers was harsh, with little hope for the future. The Depression—and, ironically, some New Deal programs—deepened their economic plight. To increase sagging crop prices, the government paid farmers to reduce production. Large landowners chose to evict thousands of sharecropper and tenant families from unplanted land. The growing use of gas-powered farm machines eliminated the need for many tenant farmers.

The region's large African American population carried the heaviest burden. In 1930 more than eighty percent of American blacks lived in the South. Jim Crow segregation laws and the legacy of slavery forced them to endure poverty, discrimination, and racial violence.

FSA photographers captured the varied worlds of black and white farm workers throughout the South. They also explored the region's mill towns and cities.



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## The Northeast and Midwest



The FSA photography unit is best known for its images of rural life in the South, the Great Plains and the West. But in thousands of images FSA photographers also created a vivid record of life in the farms, towns, and cities of the Northeast and Midwest.

Agency photographers documented mining towns in Pennsylvania, slum housing in Chicago and Washington D.C. and rural life in Ohio, New England, and upstate New York. They studied the lives of migrant farm workers in Michigan and the homes of packinghouse employees in New Jersey. Their work offers glimpses into everything from unemployment lines and child labor to social life and leisure activities.



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## The Skull Controversy



Arthur Rothstein, May 1936.

"I never felt any compunction about moving people around and posing them.... I don't think that in any way detracts from the documentary value of the photograph because that isn't what 'documentary' photograph means to me. It isn't something that you happen to see.... [it's] an expression of the essence of what you are seeing."

-Jack Delano, 1964

In the summer of 1936 the photo unit was engulfed in controversy. The trouble began in the Dakotas, when photographer Arthur Rothstein noticed a sun-bleached cow's skull on a parched alkali flat. Rothstein photographed it. Then he moved the skull to a different location, arranging it beside a cactus and some scrub grass to create a photograph that suggested that overgrazing had created the barren environment.

When Rothstein's actions were discovered, critics accused the FSA of "staging" photographs to make drought conditions on the Great Plains appear worse than they actually were.

The photo unit survived the "skull controversy." Yet the incident raises important questions about the nature of documentary photography.

Like letters and documents, photographs are a form of historical evidence. They are complex and incomplete sources. It is important to approach them with a critical eye and ask questions of them. Why, for instance, was a photograph made? Who made it? How was it created? What was its intended audience? Where was it seen? The activities included later in this guide will allow these questions to be explored in greater detail.



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## The Photo Project Goes to War

With the outbreak of World War II, the focus of the FSA photo project began to change. As the nation's attention turned from economic and social issues at home to the war against Germany, Italy and Japan, the photo unit reflected this shift. Roy Stryker encouraged his photographers to take more "positive" images of American life to bolster America's war effort. And while FSA photographers continued to document poverty and inequality, they were told to increase their output of photographs featuring reassuring images of American life. Pictures of defense factories, war workers and patriotic activities on the home front also began entering the FSA files.



In October 1942 the FSA photo unit became part of the new Office of War Information (OWI), created to direct America's wartime propaganda efforts. The following year the unit formally went out of existence. Director Roy Stryker left government and a few FSA photographers went to work for the OWI.



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## Saving the FSA Photographs

As the FSA photo project neared its end, Director Roy Stryker faced a dilemma. From 1935 to 1943, he had created a vast trove of nearly eighty thousand photographs (and 68,000 unprinted negatives). Stryker recognized the importance of this collection to history and feared it might be dispersed when it came under the full control of the Office of War Information (OWI).

A seasoned Washington bureaucrat, Stryker had been maneuvering as early as 1939 to secure a safe harbor for the collection in the Library of Congress. Now, working with his friend Archibald MacLeish --who was both the Librarian of Congress and Assistant Director of the OWI-- Stryker helped arrange a transfer of the entire FSA photo file to the Library's custody under unusual terms. The Library took title to the collection in 1944, but loaned it back to the OWI for the duration of the war. In 1946, the collection was physically moved to the Library, where it is available to all for study and reproduction.



This curriculum guide draws from that collection and presents a new generation the opportunity to examine the role of photographs as historical evidence. By examining, thinking, and asking questions about photographs, students will learn to better understand how and why they were created and used.





# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## Photographs as Historical Evidence

A photograph is a view into a place and moment in time. Yet that view is limited to what fits in the camera's frame and what the photographer chooses to put there. Photo cropping further restricts what we see.

Often, what's outside a picture's frame can reveal a lot. This Dorothea Lange photograph of a Mississippi plantation owner and his field workers is a good example. Lange's framing and composition suggest a great deal about class and race in the deep South. The owner dominates the photograph, much as, we suspect, he ruled his workers' lives.

But Lange's photograph also contains a revealing detail. On the left, part of the head and hand of her husband (economist Paul Taylor) is visible. Taylor accompanied Lange on some assignments and talked with people she photographed. Sometimes his questions distracted Lange's subjects, letting her capture unguarded moments. Editors often crop Taylor out of this photograph. This improves the appearance of the photograph, but removes evidence about how it was created.



Dorothea Lange, June 1936.

Editorial cropping can also change a photograph's meaning. In 1938, poet Archibald MacLeish used a heavily cropped version of Lange's photograph to illustrate a poem. The cropped image assumes a very different meaning in its new context.

**Excerpt from the poem *Land of the Free*  
by Archibald MacLeish, 1938**

*We told ourselves we were free because we were free.  
We were free because we were that kind.  
We were Americans.*

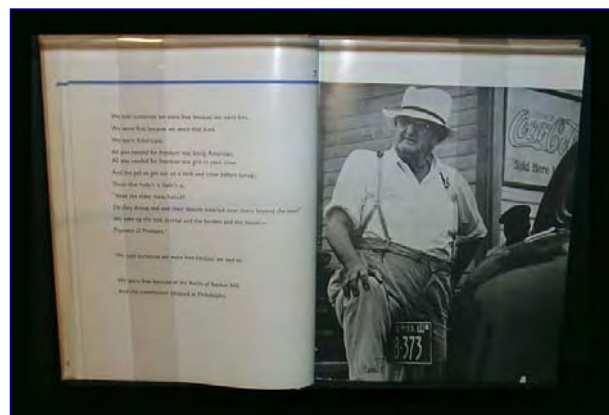
*All you needed for freedom was being American.  
All you needed for freedom was grit in you craw  
And the gall to get out on a limb and crow before sunup.*

*Those that hadn't it hadn't it.*

*"Have the elder races halted?*

*Do they drop and end their lessons wearied over there  
beyond the seas?*

*We take up the task eternal and the burden and the lesson  
— Pioneers O Pioneers."*







# Curriculum Guide

## *"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

Nearly all of the photographs shot by the FSA are black and white. But during the photo unit's later years a few photographers began experimenting with color photography. In some cases, these photographers shot the same subjects in both black and white and color.

These photographs are drawn from the 644 color transparencies and 35 mm Kodachrome slides in the FSA photo collection. None of these color images were published during the 1930s and 1940s. The entire group was only discovered at the Library of Congress during the 1970s.



Jack Delano, December 1941.



Arthur Rothstein, January 1942.



Jack Delano, December 1942.

These images can seem startling, because we are accustomed to experiencing the 1930s and 1940s in black and white. But color photography draws the viewer into the past in a different way. Color makes the photographs appear more immediate and intimate. Faces in color appear more real--more like us. The effect is often arresting.

These are just a few technical and editorial considerations that need to be kept in mind when viewing photographs as historical evidence. The activities that follow will allow your students the opportunity to explore these and other considerations in greater detail.



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## Overview: The Great Depression



*"This great nation will endure as it  
has endured, will revive, and will prosper..."*

Franklin D. Roosevelt  
March 4, 1933

As Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke these simple and inspiring words, Americans from coast to coast, weary from years of economic hardship, were willing to take the freshly minted President at his word. He was offering them hope, which was all that many people had left. The economic hardships brought on by the Great Depression had reached a pinnacle by the spring of 1933. The banking system was near collapse, a quarter of the labor force was unemployed, and prices and production were down by a third from their 1929 levels. Just a few short years before, Herbert Hoover had proclaimed, "We in America today are nearer to the final triumph over poverty than ever before in the history of any land." How could things have gone so wrong, so fast?

Conventional wisdom places the beginning of the Great Depression on "Black Tuesday" October 29, 1929, but the factors undermining the economic stability of American and world markets had been in play for some time. One of those factors was a lack of diversification in the American economy throughout the 1920's. American prosperity had been built on a few core industries, most noteworthy automobiles and construction. As the 1920's progressed, market saturation began to take hold and automobile and construction expenditures began to drop dramatically.



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

In addition to the declining demand for products, purchasing power began to skew against those at the lower end of the economic ladder. As demand for products decreased, so did wages - especially for farmers and factory workers. More and more consumers found themselves unable to afford the goods and services the economy was producing. This resulted in even less demand and sparked lay offs and factory shut downs.

Yet another factor contributing to the economic woes of the nation was the dubious debt structure of the economy. Farmers who traditionally live on or near the edge of economic prosperity, were being hit with the double whammy of declining crop prices and a continuing drought that was literally turning their land to unuseable dust. Crop prices were too low to cover the fixed costs of machinery, taxes, mortgages and other debts. By 1933, nearly 45 percent of farms were behind in their mortgage payments and faced foreclosure. Many farmers in the southwest region of the country that had come to be called the Dust Bowl simply abandoned their farms. These "Arkies" and "Oakies" loaded up their families and whatever possessions they could carry and headed west.

A final factor came from beyond our borders. When World War I finally concluded, the Allied nations of Europe owed American banks huge sums of money. With the European economies in shambles, not even the victorious countries were able to make their payments to American banking institutions. They had insisted on reparations from the defeated nations in hopes of using those resources to repay their American creditors. The defeated nations were even less able to muster the necessary funds. American banks refused to forgive the debts, but they did allow European governments to take out additional loans to pay down the original debts. This created a dangerous cycle of paying debts by incurring still more debt. By the end of the 1920's, the American economy was beginning to weaken due to the factors mentioned above. In an effort to protect American manufacturing, protective tariffs were put in place making it more and more difficult for European goods to enter the United States, and many soon defaulted on their loans bringing about a world wide economic crisis.



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## Overview: The New Deal

In 1932, Franklin D. Roosevelt was in his second term as Governor of New York. He had steered the Empire State through the early years of the Great Depression with relative success and set his sights on the presidency. The summer before the 1932 election, in his acceptance speech before the Democratic National Convention, Roosevelt had promised, "a new deal for the American people." Yet many of the programs that would come to epitomize the New Deal –the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA), Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), Social Security Insurance, Works Progress Administration (WPA), National Recovery Administration (NRA), and the Farm Security Administration (FSA), were still in their most embryonic stages.



Upon taking office, the new President began immediately to make good on his pledge to get the country moving again. The pace of his first one hundred days in office, beginning in March of 1933, was a whirlwind which produced and passed no less than fifteen major pieces of legislation. Roosevelt sought to establish broad relief measures, major new programs in industrial and agricultural planning, and banking reform. Though the scope of the programs he proposed seemed to some to go in all directions, the threads that held the New Deal together were Roosevelt's unbridled confidence in himself and the American People, and his commitment to bring about three R's - Relief, Recovery and Reform.

Relief for the millions of Americans who suddenly found themselves without work, without food, without shelter and without hope, was the President's first priority. He had concluded that help for the down-trodden must come from beyond the traditional private or local government sources. He believed that the federal government needed to take on



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

a larger role in providing for the well-being of the American people. Though today this concept seems quite natural, the idea of such government involvement in the affairs of business and industry was relatively new and untested in FDR's time. Critics from the political right accused him of exerting too much government influence, while critics from the left complained his programs were not ambitious enough. Roosevelt steered a steady course and kept the American public informed about his plans and their progress through a series of radio addresses that came to be called "fireside chats". These broadcasts were centered on specific topics and issues, and were delivered in warm, folksy language that made people feel they were partners in the efforts the President was putting forth.

The experiment of the New Deal yielded varied results. Some programs were nearly universally applauded such as the CCC, TVA, or the FDIC. Others such as the NRA were attacked in the media or overturned in the courts. Still others such as Social Security have become so interwoven in our social and political fabric that it is difficult to imagine a time when they did not exist. Regardless of the fate of the individual programs, the fact remains that the New Deal forever changed the political, social, and economic landscape of the United States. Historians and scholars continue to debate just how successful the relief, recovery and reform efforts of the New Deal programs were and their lingering impacts today.





# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## Related Documents

### President Roosevelt's 1933 Inaugural Address

In August 1928, shortly before his election to the presidency, Herbert Hoover had proclaimed, "We in America today are nearer to the final triumph over poverty than ever before in the history of any land." Yet by the end of his term nothing could have been farther from the truth. The Great Depression had reached a pinnacle by the spring of 1933. The banking system was near collapse, a quarter of the labor force was unemployed, and prices and production were down by a third from their 1929 levels.

The nation was looking for new leadership, and it found it in Franklin D. Roosevelt, the two-term Governor of New York. As a candidate for the presidency, Roosevelt had promised, 'a New Deal for the American people.' Upon taking office, he began immediately to make good on his pledge. Roosevelt seemed fully aware of the challenges he and the nation faced and he spoke with confidence and determination. His inaugural address, delivered on the steps of the United States Capitol building on March 4, 1933 gave the weary nation a much needed glimmer of hope.

### Stryker's Shooting Scripts

For those born after the 1930s, the Great Depression is something that can be visualized only through photography and film. Certain images have come to define our view of that uncertain time: an anxious migrant mother with her three small children; a farmer and his sons struggling through a dust storm; a family of sharecroppers gathered outside their spartan home. Reproduced repeatedly in books and films, these photographs are icons of an era.

Remarkably, many of these familiar images were created by one small government agency established by Franklin Roosevelt: the Farm Security Administration (FSA). Between 1935 and 1943, FSA photographers produced nearly eighty thousand pictures of life in Depression-era America. This remains the largest documentary photography project of a people ever undertaken. Though the images were collected through the lenses of more than a dozen photographers, they were directed by the vision of one man, Roy Stryker.

Stryker had a keen sense of the types of subjects he wanted captured on film and encouraged his photographers to read about the regions and people they were photographing. He often gave them "shooting scripts" describing assignment themes.



THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

March 25, 1933.

This is the original of the Inaugural Address - March 4th, 1933 - and was used by me at the Capitol. Practically the only change, except for an occasional word, was the sentence at the opening, which I added longhand in the Senate Committee Room before the ceremonies began.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Franklin D. Roosevelt", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

\*\*\*\*\*

INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF  
PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT  
MARCH 4, 1933.

*This is a day of consecration.*

I am certain that my fellow Americans expect that on my induction into the Presidency I will address them with a candor and a decision which the present situation of our nation impels. This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So first of all let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself, - nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory. I am convinced that you will again give that support to leadership in these critical days.

In such a spirit on my part and on yours we face our common difficulties. They concern, thank God, only material things. Values have shrunk to fantastic levels; taxes have risen; our ability to pay has fallen; government of all kinds is faced by serious curtailment of income; the

means of exchange are frozen in the currents of trade; the withered leaves of industrial enterprise lie on every side; farmers find no markets for their produce; the savings of many years in thousands of families are gone.

More important, a host of unemployed citizens face the grim problem of existence, and an equally great number toil with little return. Only a foolish optimist can deny the dark realities of the moment.

Yet our distress comes from no failure of substance. We are stricken by no plague of locusts. Compared with the perils which our forefathers conquered because they believed and were not afraid, we have still much to be thankful for. Nature still offers her bounty and human efforts have multiplied it. Plenty is at our doorstep, but a *generous* vast use of it languishes in the very sight of the supply. Primarily, this is because the rulers of the exchange of mankind's goods have failed through their own stubbornness and their own incompetence, have admitted their failure and abdicated. Practices of the unscrupulous money changers stand indicted in the court of public opinion, rejected by the hearts and minds of men.

True, they have tried, but their efforts have been cast in the pattern of an outworn tradition. Faced by failure of credit they have proposed only the lending of more money. Stripped of the lure of

profit by which to induce our people to follow their false leadership they have resorted to exhortations, pleading tearfully for restored confidence. They know only the rules of a generation of self-seekers. They have no vision, and when there is no vision the people perish.

The money changers have fled from their high seats in the temple of our civilization. We may now restore that temple to the ancient truths. The measure of the restoration lies in the extent to which we apply social values more noble than mere monetary profit.

Happiness lies not in the mere possession of money; it lies in the joy of achievement, in the thrill of creative effort. The joy and moral stimulation of work no longer must be forgotten in the mad chase of evanescent profits. These dark days will be worth all they cost us if they teach us that our true destiny is not to be ministered unto but to minister to ourselves and to our fellow-men.

Recognition of the falsity of material wealth as the standard of success goes hand in hand with the abandonment of the false belief that public office and high political position are to be valued only by the standards of pride of place and personal profit; and there must be an end to a conduct in banking and in business which too often has given to a sacred trust the likeness of callous and selfish wrongdoing. Small

wonder that confidence languishes, for it thrives only on honesty, on honor, on the sacredness of obligations, on faithful protection, on unselfish performance: without them it cannot live.

Restoration calls, however, not for changes in ethics alone. This nation asks for action, and action now.

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.

Hand in hand with this we must frankly recognize the over-balance of population in our industrial centers and, by engaging on a national scale in a redistribution, endeavor to provide a better use of the land for those best fitted for the land. The task can be helped by definite efforts to raise the values of agricultural products and with this the power to purchase the output of our cities. It can be helped by preventing realistically the tragedy of the growing loss through foreclosure, of our small homes and our farms. It can be helped by insistence that the federal, state and local governments act forthwith



on the demand that their cost be drastically reduced. It can be helped by the unifying of relief activities which today are often scattered, uneconomical and unequal. It can be helped by national planning for and supervision of all forms of transportation and of communications and other utilities which have a definitely public character. There are many ways in which it can be helped, but it can never be helped merely by talking about it. We must act and act quickly.

Finally, in our progress toward a resumption of work we require two safeguards against a return of the evils of the old order: there must be a strict supervision of all banking and credits and investments; there must be an end to speculation with other people's money, and there must be provision for an adequate but sound currency.

These are the lines of attack. I shall presently urge upon a new Congress in special session detailed measures for their fulfillment, and I shall seek the immediate assistance of the several states.

Through this program of action we address ourselves to putting our own national house in order and making income balance outgo. Our international trade relations though vastly important, are in point of time and necessity secondary to the establishment of a sound national economy. I favor as a practical policy the putting of first things first.

I shall spare no effort to restore world trade by international economic readjustment, but the emergency at home cannot wait on that accomplishment.

The basic thought that guides these specific means of national recovery is not narrowly nationalistic. It is the insistence, as a first consideration, upon the interdependence of the various elements in and parts of the United States -- a recognition of the old and permanently important manifestation of the American spirit of the pioneer. It is the way to recovery. It is the immediate way. It is the strongest assurance that the recovery will endure.

In the field of world policy I would dedicate this nation to the policy of the good neighbor -- the neighbor who resolutely respects himself and because he does so, respects the rights of others -- the neighbor who respects his obligations and respects the sanctity of his agreements in and with a world of neighbors.

If I read the temper of our people correctly we now realize as we have never realized before our interdependence on each other: that we cannot merely take but we must give as well; that if we are to go forward we must move as a trained and loyal army willing to sacrifice for the good of a common discipline, because without such discipline no progress is

made, no leadership becomes effective. We are, I know, ready and willing to submit our lives and property to such discipline because it makes possible a leadership which aims at a larger good. This I propose to offer, pledging that the larger purposes will bind upon us all as a sacred obligation with a unity of duty hitherto evoked only in time of armed strife.

With this pledge taken, I assume unhesitatingly the leadership of this great army of our people dedicated to a disciplined attack upon our common problems.

Action in this image and to this end is feasible under the form of government which we have inherited from our ancestors. Our constitution is so simple and practical that it is possible always to meet extraordinary needs by changes in emphasis and arrangement without loss of essential form. That is why our constitutional system has proved itself the most superbly enduring political mechanism the modern world has produced. It has met every stress of vast expansion of territory, of foreign wars, of bitter internal strife, of world relations.

It is to be hoped that the normal balance of executive and legislative authority may be wholly adequate to meet the unprecedented task before us. But it may be that an unprecedented demand and need

for undelayed action may call for temporary departure from that normal balance of public procedure.

I am prepared under my constitutional duty to recommend the measures that a stricken nation in the midst of a stricken world may require. These measures, or such other measures as the Congress may build out of <sup>its</sup> their experience and wisdom, I shall seek, within my constitutional authority, to bring to speedy adoption.

But in the event that the Congress shall fail to take one of these two courses, and 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.

For the trust reposed in me I will return the courage and the devotion that befit the time. I can do no less.

We face the arduous days that lie before us in the warm courage of national unity; with the clear consciousness of seeking old and precious moral values; with the clean satisfaction that comes from the stern

performance of duty by old and young alike. We aim at the assurance of a rounded and permanent national life.

We do not distrust the future of essential democracy. The people of the United States have not failed. In their need they have registered a mandate that they want direct vigorous action. They have asked for discipline and direction under leadership. They have made me the present instrument of their wishes. In the spirit of the gift I take it.

In this dedication of a nation we humbly ask the blessing of God. May he protect each and every one of us. May He guide me in the days to come.

---

*This is the original reading copy I  
used March 4<sup>th</sup>*



To all photographers  
Roy E. Stryker

F.S.A.  
1940

SUGGESTIONS FOR PHOTOGRAPHS

If at any time you have a chance, please include a set of pictures on the following:

- A. Meeting-places - official, semi-official, and for general loafing:
  - 1. Town halls
  - 2. Court rooms
  - 3. Court-house steps
  - 4. Square; common
  - 5. Village fountain, pump
  - 6. Street corners
  - 7. Garages and filling-stations
  - 8. Blacksmith shops; livery stables (rare)
  - 9. Pool and billiard halls
  - 10. Soda counters
  - 11. Beer halls
  - 12. Police and fire stations
  - 13. Clubs and lodges
  - 14. Churches
  - 15. All types of war meetings are of especial interest  
(see Small Town script)
- B. Salvation Army
  - 1. Street meetings
  - 2. Band
  - 3. Singing
  - 4. Close-ups - faces and hands
  - 5. Preaching
  - 6. Street audience - close shots and pan shots
  - 7. Shots in hall - meetings in action
- C. Pool hall studies
  - 1. Player
  - 2. Watchers and loafers
  - 3. Close-ups

COPY

To all photographers  
Roy E. Stryker

F.S.A.  
1939

General Notes for pictures needed for files

SMALL TOWNS

Stores  
    outside views  
    front views  
    cars and horses and  
    buggies (hitching racks)  
  
    inside views  
    goods on shelves  
    people buying  
    people coming out of store  
    with purchases  
    farm machinery displays

Churches  
    on Sunday, if possible

"Court Day"

Children at play (dogs)

Movie

Men loafing under trees

Local baseball games  
    players  
    spectators

"The Vacant Lot"

Main Street

RURAL

Homes

Barns  
    Representative types

Fences  
    All types -- rail  
    stone

INDUSTRY

Coal  
    Mines  
    Coal tipples  
    R.R. yards with coal cars

Lumbering  
    Cut-over land  
    Small sawmills  
    Lumber

Ghost Towns  
    Factories with windows broken

THE HIGHWAY

Pictures which emphasize the fact  
that the American highway is very  
often a more attractive place  
than the places Americans live.

"Restless America"

Beautiful Highways  
    Elm, or maple at the curve  
    of the road -- contrast with  
    rural and industrial scenes  
    which highways pass through

Lunch Rooms and Filling Station  
    Truckers stopped to eat

Trailers on Road

People walking on road

Horse and buggy on road  
    Back view -- country road

Signs  
    Large signs  
    On trees -- barns -- roofs  
    Town and village

### SPRING

Fitting ground for planting, plowing and harrowing.

Planting.

Trees in bud and in blossom.

New-plowed earth (early morning or late afternoon).

Show "texture." Get the feel of "good earth" into the picture.

Burning weeds and brush.

Cleaning and painting boats.

Gardening.

Clothes airing on the line.

Store windows -- spring clothes, garden equipment.

Seed stores -- "plants and shrubs for sale."

### WEATHER

We need more pictures taken to get the feeling of "weather" -- rain, mist and fog, snow, wind.

A few very good cloud pictures will be acceptable.

### GENERAL

The country -- show photographically, if possible, the nature of the land:

Hills and mountains

Deep valleys (towns in valleys)

Roads (ahead over hills as seen by driver from car)

Forests and rivers

F. S. A.  
1940

To: All Photographers

From: R. E. S.

Some Suggestions for Pictures on Migrants

Health

Sanitary facilities

Sickness

Medical attention (or absence of)

Recreation

What do the migrants do for amusement?

What do the youngsters do?

"Help Wanted" signs

Farmer "hunting" help in the towns

Washing clothes

Eating

Cooking

Do the youngsters work in the fields?

Get ages of those you take if possible

"Air views" of camps (from as high a spot as possible)

Both the raising and harvesting of fruit and vegetable crops in Florida as well as the canning and packing of the produce are accompanied by a large influx of agricultural migratory labor. There are two main reasons for this:

The growing season is comparatively short and intense requiring a large force of workers for a short period. A great expansion in labor needs lasts from only a few weeks in the celery, lettuce, bean and tomato fields to six or seven months in the citrus groves. The time for picking, packing and canning oranges and grapefruit comes at the peak of the winter vegetable season.

Farming in the northern states is at a standstill during the period that workers are needed in Florida. An opportunity to make some money and in addition spend the winter in a more equable climate is an incentive to many. Some of the workers are sharecroppers and tenant farmers from Alabama and Georgia.

Since the work is seasonal and the rate of pay low, the worker cannot remain in one place even if he should so desire. This situation has created a class of "fruit tramps" - men, women and whole families who follow the crops and thereby maintain an annual wage that keeps them in a low standard of living throughout the year. A typical fruit tramp might follow this route:

Belle Glade, Fla. - Dec.  
Deerfield, Homestead, Fla. - Jan., Feb.  
Plant City, Fla. - Feb.  
Stark, Fla. - April  
Menchacoula, La. - April, May  
Bald Knob, Ark. - May  
Humboldt, Tenn. - May  
Paducah, Ky. - May, June  
Baroda, Riverside, Mich. - June  
Bear Lake, Hart, Shelby, Mich. - July  
Northport, Mich. - Aug.

From this point, he might proceed back to Florida obtaining work in New York apple orchards in the fall. Others cover a wider territory and after leaving Florida sometimes get as far as the Yakima valley of Washington. There are weeks of travel and periods of idleness between growing seasons which the migrant must withstand. Loss of a crop through drought, flood or frost is more than they can provide for. A large percentage of their earnings go for transportation between jobs. Single men and women travel by automobile in groups and live in boarding houses. Families live and travel in homemade trailers or trucks with converted bodies. Most of them express a desire to settle down but in the summer only a minority are able to return to farming, usually on a tenant or sharecrop basis. There are a number of small farm owners, from the middlewest, who come to Florida for a vacation and obtain a job as supervisor or foreman to help pay their expenses. They live in the more expensive tourist and trailer camps and tend to increase competition for the better paid positions.



On the whole, conditions among the citrus workers are better than among the vegetable workers. The Florida citrus groves are in the central portion of the state characterized by a slight ridge or hammock and numerous lakes. The people in this section are better educated and enjoy a higher standard of living than those in the drained swamp lands where vegetables are grown. The proportion of migrants in the citrus groves and packing plants is less than in the vegetable area. At least 50% of the workers in the Winterhaven district were permanent residents. Also, the other half of the workers were fairly certain of getting their seasonal job again.

The wage rate of 20 ¢ an hour is the same for both citrus and vegetable workers. However, the weekly wage for the citrus worker is higher because of a more regular and fuller work-week. The average wage is about \$15.00 a week. Living expenses for a small family amount to \$9.00 a week -- that is, bare subsistence. Unless there is a frost, the citrus worker is sure of six months work which gives him an annual wage of about \$400.00.

Working conditions in the citrus industry are fairly good and grievances are minor. Attempts to organize a labor union, however, are met with apathy by the workers and strong opposition from the employers. The few men who have attempted such organization are effectively kept from obtaining work anywhere. Employer's associations work cooperatively to avoid cut-throat competition, to keep the cost of production down and to maintain a fair price for their product. Wage rates are fixed and standard and the constant available supply of cheap labor from nearby states tend to keep them that way.

In the vegetable area, work is very irregular and dependent to a large extent on weather conditions. The crop of beans, celery, lettuce or tomatoes has to be picked at exactly the right time. This type of work is usually done by negroes who crawl on their hands and knees in the black soil which is known as "muck". Many of them, as a result, get an occupational rash or "muck itch". The pickers receive 15¢ a hamper of beans. Although two or three hampers can be filled in an hour, their earnings are not high because so many pickers are used that the job is finished in a hurry. There is a large proportion of migrants among the negroes. The migrant workers usually move in with families who are permanent residents of the negro quarter. This section of town is always full of shiny new automobiles against a background of dance halls, bars and unpainted shacks.

Except for a few negroes who do the heavy lifting and moving, the canning and packing plants employ white workers. Hours of work are dependent upon the amount of produce brought in from the fields. On some days there might be only one hour's work and on others fifteen. This uncertainty extends also to the length of the "season". When periods of idleness become too frequent, migration begins. In all of the plants a belt system maintains a rapid working pace. Sometimes the workers have to stand in water. Child labor is employed, even on night shifts. Under the best conditions, the weekly wage is about \$10.00. It often falls as low as \$2.00.

Living conditions in tourist and trailer camps are characterized by overcrowding and unsanitary conditions. Large families live in one room cabins or small tents. There is neither privacy nor respect for property. Fights are common, sometimes accompanied by stabbings. Well-defined family distinctions which exist in the day time grow rather vague at night. Often a man and woman will live together as "good friends" and when the season is over, leave for different localities. There is probably a high percentage of venereal infection. Conditions are such that some program of education and rehabilitation is obviously necessary.



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## Vocabulary

**Arkies**—Migrant workers from Arkansas displaced by crop failures and dust storms.

**Black Tuesday**—Tuesday, October 29, 1929. The New York Stock Market crashed. Generally referred to as the event which marked the beginning of the Great Depression, more accurately, it was only the first major visible sign of the Depression.

**Ditchback Camps**—Slang term for shanty-town buildings located in the fields near irrigation ditches. These small unsanitary shacks were generally located in the back of the camps.

**Drought**—A long period without precipitation.

**Dust Bowl**—Term used to describe much of the south western Great Plains in the 1930's, which experienced frequent dust storms and loss of agricultural income.

**Dust Storm**—Huge clouds of dirt caused by a combination of drought, high winds, and poor conservation practices. A dust storm could last up to three days, and cover large areas.

**Evict**—To remove people from someplace against their will; usually land or a building such as a home.

***The Grapes of Wrath***—The John Steinbeck novel about an Oklahoma farm family that moved west to California and became migrant workers.

**Great Depression**—(1929-1941) Period of economic downturn during which wages decreased dramatically and nearly 25% of the US labor force was unemployed; the Great Depression had worldwide effects.

**Greenbelt Towns**—An experimental federal housing program consisting of a planned town surrounded by agricultural land. There were Greenbelt towns constructed by the Resettlement Administration in Maryland, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

**Jim Crow Laws**—Laws passed in the South after the Civil War that segregated or separated people by race in public places.

**Jobs Programs**—Unemployed people are given work by the federal government building roads and bridges, planting trees and even painting murals and writing guide books.



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

**Migrant Worker**—A person, generally an agricultural laborer, who moves from place to place in search of work.

**My Day**—The series of daily newspaper columns written by Eleanor Roosevelt beginning in 1936 and continuing until just before her death 1962. These articles chronicled her many interests and activities.

**Okies**—Migrant workers from Oklahoma displaced by crop failures and dust storms.

**Propaganda**—Information designed to promote or refute a particular cause or idea.

**(Anna) Eleanor Roosevelt (1886-1962)** —Wife of Franklin D. Roosevelt, she served as First Lady of the United States from 1933 to 1945 and was known as a reformer and humanitarian intent on advancing social justice, human rights, freedom and liberty. She was called "The First Lady of the World" by President Harry Truman and served on the first United States delegation to the United Nations, where she helped draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945)** —As the Thirty-second President of the United States, Roosevelt was elected four times and led the country through the two major crises of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Great Depression and World War II. Roosevelt believed that the government should take an active role in ensuring the economic well-being of the average citizen and brought relief, recovery and reform through his many New Deal programs. During World War II Roosevelt along with the leaders of England and the Soviet Union, crushed Hitler and the Axis powers.

**Rural**—Having to do with farming, a way of life outside the city.

**Urban**—Having to do with life in an industrialized, city environment.

**Sharecroppers**— Farmers who work land owned by someone else in return for a portion (share) of the crops grown. This practice gained popularity in the South following the Civil War and was common during the Great Depression.

**Socialistic**—A system of government or community control of land, capital, and industry.

**Tenant Farmer**—A person who rents land from a landowner for the purposes of growing crops or raising livestock.

**Tenement**—A low rent apartment building that generally includes very few amenities and is usually characterized by overcrowded conditions.



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## Government Agencies, Organizations and/or Programs

**Farm Security Administration (FSA)** — Tasked with improving conditions for the rural poor. This goal was advanced by photographing the severe conditions faced by American farmers during the Great Depression, and the government's efforts to bring relief.

**Federal Arts Project (FAP)** — The FAP was a part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) which provided work for unemployed artists, actors, musicians and writers.

**Library of Congress**—This is the oldest federal cultural institution in America and the largest library in the world. It serves as the research arm of the Congress and has countless collections housed on more than 530 miles of bookshelves. The FSA photos are kept in the Library of Congress.

**New Deal**—The term given to the collection of more than forty federal government programs created by Franklin D. Roosevelt to help America out of the Great Depression and through World War II. Examples include the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA), Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), Social Security, and the Farm Security Administration (FSA).

**Office of War Information (OWI)** — This agency was set up to educate people on the major issues of World War II and the importance of American involvement in postwar issues.

**Resettlement Administration (RA)** —This agency was formed to improve land-use practices and help those affected by land misuse such as exploitative farming, lumbering, mining, and oil drilling. It also constructed camps for migrant workers and resettled farmers to more productive land.

## Geographic Regions

**Northeast**—A region of the United States generally considered to include New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine.

**South**—A region of the United States generally considered to include Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, Arkansas.





# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

**Midwest**—A region of the United States generally considered to include Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota.

**Great Plains**—A region of the United States generally considered to include North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma.

**Southwest**—A region of the United States generally considered to include Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and Nevada.

**Rockies**—A region of the United States generally considered to include Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah.

**Pacific (Northwest)**—A region of the United States generally considered to include Oregon, Washington.

**California**—The western most state in the continental United States. It comprises nearly two-thirds of the west coast.



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## Teaching Activities and Assignments

The following activities have been developed for teachers to use in the classroom or as homework assignments. They are grouped under the following topics: history; civics, citizenship, and government; writing; geography; fine arts; and hands-on-learning. Each assignment has been designed in a way that allows students to utilize a variety of skills including: reading for understanding; interpreting audiovisual materials; analyzing photographs, letters, reports, correspondence, and speeches; writing with clarity; role-playing; and researching historic evidence. Each of the activities can be adapted to suit your students' needs and your own teaching style.

The educational impact of these activities will be greatly enhanced by a class visit to the Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum to view the FSA exhibit in person. We encourage you to contact our education department at 1 800 FDR-VISIT (prompt 4 for Education Department) to discuss fieldtrip arrangements.

### History

- 1) **Photographs used as historical evidence:** Use the photographs provided as the basis for a discussion on the use of photography as historical evidence. When doing so have your students consider the following questions:
  - a. What is happening in the photograph?
  - b. What are the specific details that provide clues to what is happening?
  - c. Are there any details that suggest a date or a time of the event?
  - d. Are there any details that suggest the event is happening in a particular place?
  - e. What is your general impression of the photograph?
  - f. What general conclusions can be drawn from the photograph?
  - g. What do you think prompted the photographer to take this particular picture?
  - h. What might an appropriate caption be for this photograph?
  - i. What biases or assumptions surround the photograph?
- 2) **The importance of keeping and maintaining historic records:** Describe the importance of keeping and maintaining historic records. Remind students that historical evidence can come in the form of photographic images, written and printed documents, three dimensional objects and artifacts, sound recordings, and oral histories. Have students read letters and diaries, examine period objects and artifacts from the Great Depression, and discuss how they contribute to our understanding of the era.



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## Fine Arts

- 3) **Photographs used for observation:** Use the photographs provided to engage students in photographic observation. Encourage them to discover and observe such elements as: composition, balance, rhythm, focal point, perspective, cropping, lighting, modes of transportation, style and condition of clothing, architectural styles and features, geographic and topographic features, fixtures and furnishings, and technology. Ask students to consider the possible points of view and motivations of the photographer. Ask students to compare each of these elements to conditions today.
- 4) **Art imitates life.** Have students read John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, or arrange for them to view the classic film version of the book. How do the images conjured up in their minds, or presented on the screen, compare to those taken by the photographers of the FSA? What are the sub-themes that run throughout the book, film, and FSA images?

## Civics, Citizenship, and Government

- 5) **Documenting government efforts:** Explain that the photography project was begun by the Farm Security Administration to document rural poverty and the government efforts to alleviate it. Lead a discussion of the use and effectiveness of images in conveying a story and influencing public perception. Share and discuss how more modern examples, such as President Bush flying on to an aircraft carrier anchored just off the coast of California or the 1988 image of Michael Dukakis driving around in a tank have influenced public opinion.
- 6) **Photographs then and now:** Ask students to select one of the photographs provided in this packet and find a contemporary photograph from a current newspaper or magazine that shows a similar situation or a totally contrary situation. Then have them explain the similarities or differences. Ask them to research if there is a government agency or program designed to address the situation and have them assess the success or failure of the program.
- 7) **A President speaks to the nation:** Have students listen to a copy of President Roosevelt's March 4, 1933 Inaugural Address in which he proclaims, "This great nation will endure." Ask the students to juxtapose the upbeat, confident and, enthusiastic tones and phrases of the President's speech with the conditions facing the subjects featured in the FSA photographs.



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## Writing and Journalism

- 8) **In their own words:** Ask students to select a photograph and complete one of the following writing assignments:
  - a. A diary entry that describes in detail a typical day in their life of one of the people shown.
  - b. A diary entry that describes in detail the hopes and fears of one of the people shown.
  - c. A letter to a friend written from the perspective of one of the people shown in the picture, which describes in detail his or her feelings about the FSA photography project.
- 9) **A picture is worth a thousand words:** Ask students to select the ten most moving or meaningful photos in the exhibit or the packet provided. Have them write a brief statement about each photograph that explains why they think it important and meaningful. Ask them to write a caption that captures the essence of the image as they see it.
- 10) **FSA cub reporter:** Assign students one of the photographs included in this packet. Have them imagine that they are newspaper or magazine writers, and ask them to write an article that would accompany the photograph if it were to appear in print. Remind them that they must completely and carefully answer the who, what, when, where, and how questions that are the basis of good journalism. Have them prepare a catchy headline for the article and an appropriate caption for the photograph.

## Geography

- 11) **From sea to shining sea:** Copy the map provided in this packet and ask students to outline the following geographic areas: the Northeast, the South, the South West, the Great Plains, Midwest and California. Have them identify where the "Oakies" and "Arkies" originated and where they were going. Ask them to circle the area considered to be the Dust Bowl.

## Hands-on Learning

- 12) **Jr. FSA agent:** Provide your students with inexpensive disposable cameras and a 'shoot script' similar to the one provided to the Farm Security Administration photographers. Allow them time to photograph people and places in their communities and then collect the pictures and organize them into a photo exhibit that mirrors the *'This Great Nation Will Endure'* exhibit at the Roosevelt



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

Presidential Library and Museum. Display the exhibit in your classroom or a public space in your community.

13) **Living history:** Have students review the brief biographies of the FSA photographers and select one that they will role-play in a presentation before the rest of the class. Ask each student to select one representative photograph from among those taken by his or her preferred photographer to present and interpret for the class. Encourage the other students to study the photographs and to ask questions that probe the photographer's background and possible biases.

14) **Can we talk?** Provide students with the following copy of Carl Mydan's 1964 quote:

*"[I] don't think that the quality of the Farm Security Administration's pictures was notably great. I think what they portrayed was notably great. . . . They were great pictures then and they are now, many of them because they told the universal story of people . . . of all qualities that we find in ourselves and in each other."*

Then have the students prepare a list of interview questions they can use to prepare their own 'oral histories' of individuals in their community who experienced the Great Depression firsthand.



# Written Document Analysis Worksheet

(Created by the National Archives and Records Administration Education Staff)

## 1. Type of Document (Check one):

- |                                     |  |   |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper  | <input type="checkbox"/> Map           | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letter     | <input type="checkbox"/> Telegram      | <input type="checkbox"/> Congressional record |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patent     | <input type="checkbox"/> Press Release | <input type="checkbox"/> Census Report        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Memorandum | <input type="checkbox"/> Report        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                |

## 2. Unique Physical Qualities of the Document (Check one or more):

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interesting letterhead | <input type="checkbox"/> Notations        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handwritten            | <input type="checkbox"/> "RECEIVED" stamp |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Typed                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seals                  |   |

3. Dates of Document: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Author (or creator) of the Document: \_\_\_\_\_

Position (Title) : \_\_\_\_\_

5. For what audience was the document written?

\_\_\_\_\_

## 6. How credible (or reliable) is this source? (Check one):

☐ Very    ☐ Reasonably    ☐ Questionable    ☐ Not at all

## 7. Document Information:

A. List three things the author said that you think are important:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

B. Why do you think this document was written? What purpose does it serve?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from the document.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

D. List two things the document tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

E. Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document:

\_\_\_\_\_

F. How might this document be useful to historians?

\_\_\_\_\_



# Photograph Analysis Worksheet

(Created by the National Archives and Records Administration Education Staff)

## Step 1. **Observation**

- A. Study the photograph for 2 minutes. Form an overall impression of the photograph and then examine individual items. Next, divide the photo into quadrants and study each section to see what new details become visible.
- B. Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities in the photographs.

PEOPLE	OBJECTS	ACTIVITIES

## Step 2. **Inference**

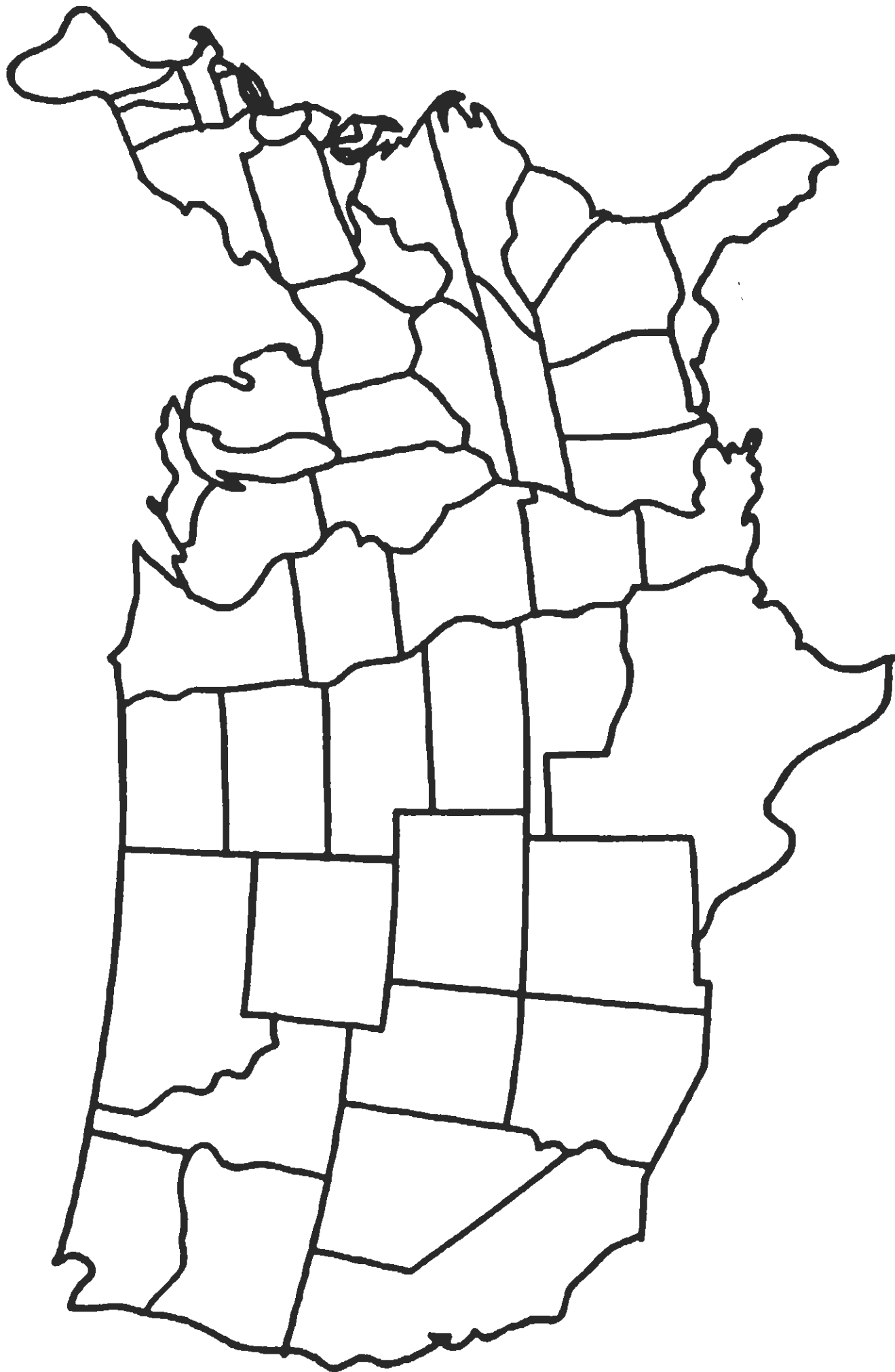
Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from this photograph

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## Step 3. **Questions**

- A. What questions does this photograph raise in your mind?
- B. Where could you find answers to them?







# Curriculum Guide Evaluation Form

(Created by the National Archives and Records Administration Education Staff)

**We value your opinion** of this curriculum guide. Please help us serve you better by completing this evaluation of: *"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression Exhibit Curriculum Guide.*

**Using the following scale, fill in 1-2-3-4-5 on each space below:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Accomplishment of stated objectives
- \_\_\_\_\_ Coverage of subject
- \_\_\_\_\_ Relevance to your needs
- \_\_\_\_\_ Quality and content of class materials
- \_\_\_\_\_ Overall presentation style

What did you expect your students to learn from this curriculum guide?

Did the curriculum guide meet your expectations?    ☐ Yes    ☐ No  
If not, how could the curriculum guide be improved?

How did you learn about this curriculum guide?

**What is your overall evaluation of this curriculum guide?** (Check one)

☐ Excellent    ☐ Very Good    ☐ Good    ☐ Fair    ☐ Poor

Your response to the following question will help us analyze the information you have already provided:

Please check the **one** category that best describes you:

- ☐ college or university staff, student, or researcher
- ☐ educator or student for K-12 grades
- ☐ professional or non-profit educational organization
- ☐ state or local government agency personnel
- ☐ foundation or Friends group associated with the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library
- ☐ general public
- ☐ other (please specify)

*If you wish to provide additional compliments, complaints and/or comments, you may contact Jeffrey Urbin at: Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, 4079 Albany Post Road, Hyde Park NY 12538 or [Jeffrey.Urbin@nara.gov](mailto:Jeffrey.Urbin@nara.gov) or (845)486-7761.*