

# ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES

**The First New Deal** *When FDR took office in 1933, the economy had been getting worse for more than three years. During the first one hundred days of his presidency, he oversaw 15 major pieces of legislation that attempted to revive the nation's economy and provide relief to the unemployed. Never before had the federal government intervened so directly in the economy. Key to stopping the economic downside was FDR's ability to inspire confidence that the nation's economic problems could be solved.*

## INAUGURAL ADDRESS, 1933

"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. . . .

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. . . .

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 simulate and reorganize the use of our natural resources."

—President Franklin D. Roosevelt, first inaugural address, delivered March 4, 1933,  
Excerpted from *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*

## VOCABULARY

**induction** process of placing an elected official into office

**vigor** strength or force

**framework** a basic supporting part or structure

**shiftless** lacking in ambition

**laissez faire** a doctrine opposing governmental interference in economic affairs

**revival** a renewal of interest



▲ Franklin D. Roosevelt takes the oath of office on March 4, 1933. FDR oversaw America's recovery from the Great Depression. He was the only American president to serve more than two terms in office.

## ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

During the whole '33 one-hundred days' Congress, people didn't know what was going on, the public. Couldn't understand these things that were being passed so fast. They knew something was happening, something good for them. They began investing and working and hoping again. . . .

The bank rescue of 1933 was probably the turning point of the Depression. When people were able to survive the shock of having all the banks closed, and then see the banks open up . . . there began to be confidence. The public helped itself, after it got confidence. It marked the **revival** of hope. . . . A Depression is much like a run on a bank. It's a crisis of confidence."

—Raymond Moley, original member of FDR's "brains-trust"

PHOTO: ©Bettmann/Corbis

### ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

“What Roosevelt and the New Deal did was to turn around and face the realities. . . . A hundred years from now, when historians look back on it, they will say a big corner was turned. People agreed that old things didn’t work. What ran through the whole New Deal was finding a way to make things work.

Before that, Hoover would loan money to farmers to keep their mules alive, but wouldn’t loan money to keep their children alive. This was perfectly right within the **framework** of classical thinking. If an individual couldn’t get enough to eat, it was because he wasn’t on the ball. It was his responsibility. The New Deal said: Anybody who is unemployed isn’t necessarily unemployed because he’s **shiftless**. . . .

Great quantities [of letters] came pouring in, letters from everywhere. . . . They were proposals from people, solutions to all sorts of problems. Some of them crackpot, some of them quite good. Everybody had suggestions. The country was aware, as it never was before, that it was on the edge of something. . . .

**Laissez faire** as such certainly did not come to an end with the New Deal. We still have a tremendous amount of freedom of decision-making in the individual corporate enterprise. The new element is the government’s positive responsibility for making our economy run.”

—Economist Gardiner C. Means, economic adviser in the Roosevelt administration

### CONTEMPORARY BOOK, 1934

“Even if the government conduct of business could give us the maximum of efficiency instead of least efficiency, it would be purchased at the cost of freedom. It would increase rather than decrease abuse and corruption, stifle initiative and invention, undermine the development of leadership, cripple the mental and spiritual energies of our people and the forces which make progress. . . .

The nation seeks for solution of its many difficulties. These solutions can come alone through the constructive forces from the system built upon Liberty. They cannot be achieved by the destructive forces of Regimentation. The purification of Liberty from abuses, the restoration of confidence in the rights of men, the release of the dynamic forces of initiative and enterprise are alone the methods by which these solutions can be found and the purpose of American life assured. . . .”

—Former president Herbert Hoover in his book, *The Challenge to Liberty* (1934)

Excerpted from *The Era of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1933–1945*

### DBQ Analyzing Historical Documents

- 1 Identifying** What is the “present situation” that President Roosevelt references in the first paragraph?
- 2 Specifying** What does President Roosevelt claim is the “greatest primary task?”
- 3 Using Context Clues** What type of language does he use in this speech? Do you think this type of language is necessary for the subject matter? Provide examples of this language.
- 4 Paraphrasing** Using your own words, explain what Fannie Lou Hamer meant when she said that the plantation owner was “raising cain.”
- 5 Analyzing** What did the plantation owner mean when he said “we are not ready for that?”
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