

# Lesson Plan – “Work Relief Project” (The New Deal)

## Background

With the Stock Market Crash of October, 1929, the United States entered a period of economic hardship known as the Great Depression. Franklin Roosevelt became President in 1933. His administration developed what became known as the New Deal. The “Alphabet Agencies” of this economic program included the AAA (Agricultural Adjustment Act), REA (Rural Electrification Administration), and CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps). The goals of the New Deal were the three “R’s” – Relief, Recovery, and Reform.

The most important immediate goal was relief – helping the many thousands of people – who had lost their jobs, homes, and often hope – survive until economic recovery set-in. From 1933-1935, the Federal Emergency Relief Commission (FERC) distributed federal money, through state agencies, for emergency relief (such as food and clothing) and to develop work projects for the employment of those on relief. In Illinois, the FERC worked with the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission (IERC). For 1935, the federal government allocated about \$1,100,000 for relief in Illinois; the state provided nearly \$36,000,000 more (the state did this by adding an additional one cent to the sales tax). The average monthly relief grant was \$30.66. In 1936, the Works Progress Administration took over the work of the FERC. The IERC later became the Illinois Public Aid Commission.

There are many stories about relief efforts in Illinois during the Depression. Caseworkers for the IERC in Pope County distributed “surplus commodities”, such as flour, smoked and canned meat, and even grapefruit – which was quite an exotic fruit back then. In Elgin in 1935, people were employed to dredge part of the Fox River. The gravel was then used to expand the surface area, which was seeded and landscaped with trees and shrubbery. On April 18, 1934, in the town of Greenville, 500-600 men marched on the local IERC headquarters with signs demanding milk, more food and a greater variety of food. However, to emphasize the crowd’s loyalty, one man carried a large American flag. In the documents below, the Village of Deerfield makes a request both to put people to work and to complete projects that will benefit the community.

Internet sources –

[www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/archives/hard\\_times/doc40](http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/archives/hard_times/doc40)

[www.springhousemagazine.com/sorrow4.htm](http://www.springhousemagazine.com/sorrow4.htm)

[www.elginhistory.com/eaah/eaah-ch08.htm](http://www.elginhistory.com/eaah/eaah-ch08.htm)

[www.greenvilleusa.org/akeith/protest.htm](http://www.greenvilleusa.org/akeith/protest.htm)

## Document 1 - "Application for Work Relief Project"

1. What is the date of the document? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What was going on with the U.S. and world economy at that time?

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3. In the document title, what do you think "relief" means?

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4. Describe the project requested by the Village of Deerfield -

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5. Who will benefit from this project (think private individuals or the public)?

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6. How many workers will be employed? \_\_\_\_\_

Why do you think they need the work? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Document 2 - "Labor Authorization for Work Relief Project"

1. Which worker gets paid at the highest rate? \_\_\_\_\_

The lowest rate? \_\_\_\_\_ Why the difference? -

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Looking at the project description in Document 1, what job might each worker do -

common laborer -- \_\_\_\_\_

plumber -- \_\_\_\_\_

truck driver -- \_\_\_\_\_

semi-skilled -- \_\_\_\_\_

3. Refer to the "Check Kind" categories in the upper left hand corner ...

Who received all the jobs -- \_\_\_\_\_

Who didn't receive any jobs -- \_\_\_\_\_

Why do you think this was so (there could be several reasons) -- \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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4. Why do you think the U.S. government required this checklist?

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