Unit 4

Louisiana:
An Identity in Transition
Bourbon Democrat governor Samuel D. McEnery went on to serve on the state supreme court and in the US Senate after losing the gubernatorial election of 1888. He was often referred to as “McLottery” as a result of the significant role he played within the organization. Learn more

Although the terms “Bourbon Democrat” and “Bourbonism” appear frequently in historical works, they are perhaps the most imprecisely used terms in southern politics. Emerging in the United States after the Civil War, the term came to define the most reactionary wing of the Democratic Party and the era in which they reigned. The Bourbon Era in Louisiana ran roughly from the enactment of the State Constitution of 1879 until
the drafting of the later State Constitution of 1898. For two decades, the policies and ambitions of Bourbon Democrats dominated Louisiana’s political and social life.

“Bourbon” Defined

At its most basic level, the personal adjective “Bourbon” suggests that the politics of its bearer are reactionary. The term referred to the Bourbon Kings who ruled France between the fall of Napoleon and the emergence of the Second Republic in 1848, and in particular, the reign of King Charles X. Believing that they might reverse the dramatic social and political changes that took place during the French Revolution and Age of Napoleon, these monarchs revived old laws intended to reassert royal authority and elite privilege at the expense of democratic principle. These changes came often on the backs of France’s poor and middle classes. The question of whether France might be ruled by a monarchy or republic was not yet settled by the end of the American Civil War, and thus, the term “Bourbon” enjoyed contemporary currency across the Atlantic where the advocates of Federal Reconstruction policy used it to paint their opponents as obstructionists who failed to grasp that Southern defeat in the Civil War had irrevocably changed the American political and social landscape.

At first, Republicans in Louisiana applied the term “Bourbon” to all opponents of Reconstruction policy, but as the factional nature of oppositional conservative politics took shape, the term only correctly applied to the most reactionary element in the Democratic Party. Like the Bourbon Kings, the Bourbon Democrats sought not only the overthrow of Reconstruction, but also stood in opposition to the compromising stances made by other Conservative-Democratic elements in Louisiana such as the Reform Party and Liberal Republicanism. Louisiana’s Bourbons strongly opposed both political and social equality for non-whites and pined for a return to the sort of social control that might guarantee the maintenance of a subservient labor force that the agrarian elite had known under slavery. While “Bourbon Democrat” was originally conceived of as an epithet, many of those who were the target of the insult embraced the term. Baton Rouge Mayor Leon Jastremski once said, “We must admit, that we are...Bourbons.”

Bourbons under Reconstruction

With Louisiana under Republican rule during Reconstruction, the Bourbons recognized their own political weakness and forged an uneasy alliance with fellow conservatives who sought Louisiana’s return to Democratic rule. This coalition ultimately proved successful through the stern policies of the White League. Yet with the return of so-called “home rule” in 1877 and the end of the Republican era, this coalition of would-be Redeemers collapsed. Animosity between Democratic factions emerged fully in 1879 when a Bourbon-dominated state constitutional convention shortened the gubernatorial term of Francis Tillou Nicholls, a moderate and Confederate war hero, and replaced him with Louis Wiltz, a Ring politician from New Orleans. For the next twenty years, Louisiana’s politics would be dominated by a three and sometimes four-way struggle for power in which the Bourbons maintained an uneasy hold on the reins of government.

The Bourbon-Ring Alliance

From the standpoint of political control, Bourbonism in Louisiana operated primarily as an alliance between the planters of the state’s cotton growing country and the political faction known as The Ring in New Orleans, a group dominated by the city’s ethnic ward bosses. While an alliance between the countryside’s lords of labor and the urban laboring masses might seem unlikely, several factors drew these sides together. Perhaps none was more important or more clear-cut than the Louisiana Lottery, but both sides supported other aims, if for entirely different reasons.
Chief Objectives

The maintenance of the constitutional charter that allowed the Louisiana Lottery to operate in the Pelican State, a measure instituted under Republican Governor Henry Clay War moth, was arguably the single most important political objective of the Bourbons. Not to be confused with modern state-run lotteries, the Louisiana Lottery was an international operation in which the state received a mere $40,000 annual payment in return for its official sanction allowing the Lottery Company to make millions each year. The state of Louisiana was one of the lottery’s smaller beneficiaries. Much more substantial sums went to key people and various popular charitable organizations that purchased the Lottery Company enormous political leverage. Lottery money often kept those who might otherwise be opposed to the Bourbon program from taking action against injustices. It also made Bourbonism stronger in Louisiana than it was in other Southern states.

Across the South, the Bourbons were legendary for reducing the tax burden on property owners. As they did elsewhere, Louisiana’s Bourbons balanced the budget by dramatically reducing investment in infrastructure such as levees, roads, and railroads and social services such as education. Indeed, whatever gains Reconstruction achieved in establishing a public school system in Louisiana, twenty years of Bourbon rule had all but demolished. Yet this opposition to public school also had philosophical underpinnings: Bourbon planters feared that education for the masses might disrupt the steady supply of cheap agricultural labor, particularly in rural parishes. One grim area that earned increased revenue for the state was the notorious convict-lease system. Like the lottery, the leasing of convicts from the state penitentiary began in 1870 under Republican rule, but the Bourbons greatly expanded upon the system. Planter and businessman S. L. James was the primary lessee at the program’s inception and sole lessee when the contract was renewed by the state in 1890. The mortality rates for convicts laboring in the lease system was much worse than known under slavery, ranging between 10 and 20 percent per year. The convict-lease system was much like any other program under the Bourbons – ripe for abuse and a vehicle engineered to enrich the politically connected at the expense of the people of Louisiana.

Perhaps the most ironic goal of the Bourbon-Ring faction was that of opposing disfranchisement legislation, though the two groups opposed such “reform” for very different reasons. By the mid-1880s, opponents to Bourbon rule began pushing for tough restrictions for voter registration — namely literacy and competency tests. These proposed laws targeted the immigrant masses of New Orleans and plantation laborers alike. While ethnicities in the metropolis might fear that the law would take away their political rights, Bourbon planters recognized that their rural parishes faced an electoral crisis should a literacy bill strike between half and eighty percent of their voters from the rolls. Planters certainly did not want their mostly black labor to vote freely, but if their names did not appear on the registration rolls, then their votes were not available to be stolen at election time. Proponents of “ballot reform” surely pursued a xenophobic and racist desire to disfranchise, but were also trying to address real and rampant political corruption in Louisiana’s countryside by which big planters undemocratically ran the state.

Key Bourbon Democrats in Louisiana

Chief among the Bourbon Democrats in Louisiana were State Treasurer Edward A. Burke and Governor Samuel D. McEnery. Burke, the poster child of Bourbon corruption, had been a member of the Louisiana delegation that negotiated the end of Reconstruction during the Compromise of 1877 and became state treasurer under Nichols the following year. He was the only executive officer of the state not removed from office by the new State Constitution of 1879, a testament to his power. Indeed, Burke was arguably the most powerful political figure in the state for much of the 1880s, and as the owner of the New Orleans Democrat, he could break an opponent. His unscrupulous ways caught up with him, however, after he lost a reelection bid in 1888. Burke’s successor discovered how much he had stolen from the state, resulting in multiple indictments and Burke’s subsequent exile in Honduras. For his part, Samuel McEnery was often referred to as “McLottery” because he was seen primarily as the tool of that organization. McEnery would go on to serve on the State Supreme Court of Louisiana and in the United States Senate after losing the gubernatorial election of 1888.
Other prominent figures included J. H. Cosgrove, an editor and politician from Natchitoches, and Henry J. Hearsey, the bombastic editor of the Democrat and later Daily States of New Orleans. Yet to say that all Bourbons were dishonest scoundrels would be inaccurate. Key party figures like Leon Jastremski, while reactionary, are considered honest by historians of the era. Likewise, Aristée Louis Tissot, a prominent judge in New Orleans and Democratic Party leader, allied with the Ring and Samuel McEnery out of party loyalty, yet fought for the political and social rights of working men of all races.

Opponents of Bourbonism

Several groups stood in opposition to the Bourbons for different reasons and at different times. Their most consistent critics always came from New Orleans, where the Reformed Democracy faction formed in opposition to the Lottery Company provisions and ouster of Nicholls during the state constitutional convention of 1879. That same year, Louisiana Congressman E. John Ellis sought to nominate former White League commander Frederick Nash Ogden as governor so as to stave off the nomination of the corrupt Ring politician, Louis Wiltz. He would again nominate Ogden in 1883 in a failed attempt to prevent the election of Samuel McEnery. The Bourbons accused Francis T. Nicholls, a frequent critic, of “rampant pseudo-liberalism” because he warned that planters needed to deal fairly with labor. At their most honest, the Reformed Democrats sought to eliminate the blatant corruption of the Louisiana Lottery, but many in the process also hoped to disfranchise and segregate the people of the state. Bourbonism was also challenged in the sugar parishes where Republicanism remained strong — not because of the party’s Reconstruction-era program of social legislation, but because sugar planters had a vested stake in the National Republicans’ protectionist policies and federal levee construction. Lastly, in the early 1890s, new opposition in the form of the Farmer’s Union emerged in response to Bourbonism’s repressive attitude toward small landowners and people of the piney woods parishes. In the end, while these groups might have removed key Bourbon figures from office, because their attack was piecemeal and often at cross-purposes, it allowed many of the basic flaws of Bourbonism to endure into the twentieth century.

The Transformation of Bourbon Rule

Bourbonism was less defeated than it was transformed during the turbulent 1890s. Reform Democrats led by former governor Francis T. Nicholls successfully managed to wrest the party’s nomination for executive office away from McEnery and the Bourbons in 1888. That they did so in New Orleans and the sugar parishes with the help of some Republicans enraged the Bourbon legislators who had come up on the losing end of this extremely bitter fight. When McEnery threatened to allow all black labor to vote its conscience in the coming fall 1888 election, a move that would surely allow the election of former Republican Governor Henry Clay Warmoth, Nicholls conceded that his Reformed Democrats must make a corrupt bargain in order to keep the Democracy in power. In exchange for bulldozing the cotton parishes for Nicholls, McEnery received an appointment to the state supreme court. For his part, Nicholls, who had long been an advocate of fairness and moderation, cast aside his noblesse oblige principles for the sake of party loyalty.

Nicholls had also been a staunch foe of the lottery since its inception, and perhaps the only positive outcome of his bargain with McEnery was that it enabled the crushing of the Louisiana Lottery. Yet despite efforts in 1891 and 1892 by Nicholls and church-led reformist anti-lottery societies, the true death knell for the lottery came when the United States Supreme Court ruled that it was illegal for the lottery to mail materials using the U.S. Postal Service. Rather than close up shop, the lottery, like E. A. Burke, fled to Horduras where it continued to operate.

The election of 1892 and subsequent efforts to fundamentally rewrite state electoral law in 1896 remained the only remaining obstacles for Louisiana to have true one-party rule in both name and in deed. Not until the Farmer’s Union movement was suppressed through cooperation between both Bourbon and Reformer Democrats could true disfranchisement take place. The potential for bi-racial cooperation in the Farmer’s Union movement scared Bourbons into realizing that they were playing with fire by keeping black labor on the
books. With the lottery money now gone, they also had little hope but to go along with the Reformer Democrats program of disfranchisement. The disfranchisers overreached in 1896, however, with a law that would have taken the ballot from most of Louisiana’s poorer whites. The widespread rejection and unrest cause by such proposals led directly to modifications such as the infamous “grandfather cause” of the 1898 State Constitution, an amendment that provided political rights for poor, illiterate whites but not their black counterparts. With its ratification, a new era dawned in Louisiana politics.

**Legacy of Bourbonism**

Although the Bourbons often reminisced that Reconstruction was a period of tragedy, one could make a far greater case that the period that followed immediately afterward set much more lasting and dangerous precedent for the state of Louisiana. While one might point to corruption among politicians of all persuasions during Reconstruction, their misdeeds pale in comparison with those perpetrated by their successors, the Bourbons. It ingrained an atmosphere of plunder that continues to cast a long shadow on the Pelican State. So, too, did the Bourbon stance on everything from education to economic development. Moreover, those who might have mitigated the damage done by the Bourbons, the Reform Democrats, only ended up meeting the Bourbons half way in a compromise forged in corruption and undemocratic principle. While this union led to the expulsion of the Louisiana Lottery, it also brought about segregation and disfranchisement, cures for corruption that were nearly as bad as the illness itself. Yet perhaps the greatest long term legacy of the Bourbons would not be the Progressive or Jim Crow eras that followed, but the sort of suffering among the common people who empowered a personality like Huey Long to amass an equally corrupt and even more untrammeled power over the state.

Author: Justin A. Nystrom
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keywords/Quotations</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who were the Bourbon Democrats in Louisiana?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were the principles of the Bourbon Democrats in Louisiana?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain the Bourbon Democrats many forms of corruption in Louisiana.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why were poor Louisianians drawn to Populist ideals?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did Bourbon Democrats prevent Populists from gaining political power in Louisiana?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Populism

in

(1880s–1890s)
In this political cartoon, ca. 1891, a man holds a “farm mortgage” and faces Uncle Sam, who is portrayed with features frequently associated with Jewish stereotypes. Uncle Sam is standing next to a sign reading, “Your Uncle Sam will advance money on crops and make loans to farmers without interest ...” Learn more

In the late nineteenth century, Americans witnessed a period of rapid industrialization and a corresponding political realignment. Expanding transportation and communication networks transformed America from a rural agrarian-based society to a modern urban industrial society championed by the captains of big business. Increasing numbers of Americans came to enjoy modern conveniences ranging from electricity to paved roads, yet not all were pleased with the changing conditions. Before the turn of the century, a political reaction known as the Populist revolt would occur, pitting those who felt victimized by the new order against those who enjoyed its rewards.

Post-Civil War Poverty

In the aftermath of the Civil War and Reconstruction, appalling poverty descended upon the South. Whole regions of the southern countryside had been devastated by war, and the federal government proved hostile to any legislation offering relief to the defeated rebels. The bankrupt southern states were forced to attempt to rebuild their shattered economies on the backs of people who had lost virtually everything. Making matters worse, southern farmers were forced to pay taxes for all the years they had been out of the Union. As a result, scores of formerly proud and independent yeomen farmers were forced off their land. At the same time, emancipation not only wiped out a multibillion-dollar investment in the slave system, it also injected huge numbers of freedmen into the labor pool, greatly exacerbating the economic chaos.

While the former slaves enjoyed their freedom, they had not been provided with the means necessary to sustain themselves—namely, land. The freedmen were often forced to steal livestock and crops to survive, a practice that pitted them at dangerous odds against desperate small farmers. Economic malaise and despair enveloped the South; in the eyes of many northerners, this was a just punishment for the defeated region.

In an effort to get people back to work and maintain the social and racial hierarchy of the Old South, many planters resorted to sharecropping. The sharecropping system allowed landless farmers, black or white, to rent a parcel of land from a landowner in exchange for a share of the crop. Furnishing merchants, often unscrupulous opportunists from the North, likewise provided the sharecroppers with goods in exchange for a share of their crop. Since the sharecropper began with no resources, the merchant placed a lien on the crop, in exchange for food and other goods, which guaranteed the merchant’s share of the crop at harvest time. When sharecroppers went to settle up at the end of a planting season, they typically found that the cotton or tobacco they produced did not cover the year’s debts, and they were forced to sign on for another season, a process that ensured a never-ending cycle of debt and poverty.

Efforts to provide relief to suffering southern farmers were typically derailed by northern congressmen who “waved the bloody shirt,” reminding their colleagues that the same southern farmers now desperate for relief had previously cast their lot with the Confederacy. Making matters worse, southern state governments, as in Louisiana, were controlled by Bourbon Democrats, whose conservative fiscal policies demonstrated far more concern for their own financial well-being than the plight of farmers. Few in Washington or in any southern state government showed much realistic concern for the plight of the freedmen, who characteristically were assigned the bottom rung in the cycle of misery.

The Rise of the Populist Party

Aware that they would have to initiate any opportunities for relief themselves, farmers in eastern Texas and other scattered regions began to organize. Led by talented and energetic Charles Macune, the emerging
Farmers' Alliance, as it came to be known, focused on educating farmers who had lost the ability to control their own destiny in a world seemingly dominated by corporate greed. The Alliance taught farmers methods of improving productivity and encouraged crop diversification. Significantly, the Farmers' Alliance also advocated a system of crop warehouses in which farmers could store their crops until prices rose. Members of the Alliance soon realized that education would not be enough to overcome the conditions that victimized them; a political movement would also be necessary to affect change.

Since Bourbon Democrats and the nationally dominant Republican Party often appeared as allies in exploitation, Alliance members concluded that it would take a new party to promote their interests. In states such as Louisiana, the very notion of supporting any party other than the Democrats—who were perceived as rescuing the South from the grips of carpetbaggers and scalawags—proved a very bitter pill to swallow. Despite such powerful concerns, by the late 1880s and early 1890s, utter desperation forced scores of Louisiana farmers, black and white, to enlist in the new Populist Party.

Though some Farmers' Alliance members such as Macune could not bring themselves to abandon the Democrats, tens of thousands did. The southern farmers found an ally among midwestern farmers, who also suffered from the institutional neglect of the federal government. In 1892 the Populist Party fielded its first presidential candidate, James B. Weaver. Though he failed to win, Weaver performed respectably. Increasing numbers of farmers flocked to the Populist banner as the farming crisis deepened in the early 1890s.

Central to the emerging Populist ideology was the subtreasury plan. Conceived by Macune, the subtreasury plan would empower the federal government to set up warehouse storage facilities and provide low-interest loans to farmers. The plan would free farmers from crop lien mortgages by allowing them to store crops until prices rose. It would also put more money into circulation. When Louisiana's Democratic congressional delegation unanimously voted against the subtreasury plan, amid growing evidence of corruption courtesy of the Louisiana Lottery, the Populist Party officially came to life in Louisiana. Farmers in northern Louisiana proved particularly receptive to the nascent political movement. Homegrown leaders such as the Reverend Benjamin Brian, his son Hardy, and B. W. Bailey encouraged farmers to take a stand against injustice.

The Rise and Fall of the Populist Party

Aware that strength lay in numbers, Populist supporters reached out to the equally outraged Negro Farmers' Alliance to advance their percentage at the polls. Across the state, Populist Party advocates hosted picnics and barbecues where orators railed against the prevailing system and urged cooperation among oppressed peoples to secure reform. Yet the sight of black and white poor folk sharing a barbeque proved unimaginable to the state's ruling elite, who increasingly regarded the Populists as a threat to their way of life.

In 1893 the nation descended into an economic depression, and the demands for an expanded money supply dramatically increased. In the 1894 congressional elections, Louisiana Populists made a determined effort to capture the Fourth and Fifth District congressional seats. Despite spirited campaigning and amid rampant allegations of fraud, the Populists were defeated, but not discouraged, in each race. Most observers concluded that if a fair election could occur, growing Populist strength in upstate Louisiana and the Florida Parishes would guarantee victory. Only in Acadia, where the Democrats successfully painted the Populists as anti-Catholic Protestants, did the movement remain weak.

Over the next few years, worsening economic conditions and increasing disillusionment with the Democratic Party's response produced growing numbers of Populists. As the election of 1896 approached, Louisiana Populists made overtures to southern Louisiana sugar planters, who frequently supported the Republicans and were also feeling the pinch of depression. Both groups relished the thought of unseating Democratic governor Murphy J. Foster—a shared purpose that would allow for a Populist-Republican fusion in the approaching gubernatorial campaign. To cement the alliance, the Fusion ticket endorsed St. Mary Parish sugar planter John N. Pharr, one of Louisiana's wealthiest men.
If the fusion of black and white farmers along with wealthy sugar planters could be maintained, the Populists seemed poised for victory. The Democrats, predictably, reacted with hysteria, alleging that the Populists represented racial equality and social upheaval. One Shreveport Democratic paper went so far as to declare, “it is the religious duty of Democrats to rob Populists and Republicans of their votes. Rob them! You bet! What are we here for?” Massive violence characterized election day 1896 across the state. When the Democratic-controlled state election commission completed the tally, it reported a narrow Foster victory. In many predominantly black parishes the Populists received not a single vote, suggesting that the results had been tampered with or that blacks had been bulldozed into voting for the Democrats. Despite armed protests against the results, especially in north central Louisiana, Foster retained his position.

The election of 1896 broke the power of the Louisiana Populist movement. It also ushered in significant social change. In the next legislative session, the Democratic-controlled assembly passed sweeping electoral law changes that markedly contracted the electorate and concentrated power in the hands of the elite. Likewise, many former Populists who supported racial unity to achieve reform now believed that blacks were unreliable allies who should be removed from the rolls lest their votes be manipulated. It is perhaps not surprising that not long after the election a Louisiana court handed down a landmark decision in the case of Plessy v. Ferguson (1896), which coined the term “separate but equal” and ushered in the era of legally enforced segregation—a dark legacy for a movement dedicated to improving the quality of life for Louisiana’s poor.

Author: Samuel C. Hyde
Excerpts from the Newspaper: The Louisiana Populist published June 5, 1896

All men who recognize the necessity for reform should join the People’s party...

All money should be full legal tender whether it suits the bankers or not...

To fund a debt is only another way of robbing the people slowly, but surely...

Let us march in solid phalanx (close formation of soldiers) against the common enemy - the Republican-Democratic Machine...

If every man who complains of money being scarce would vote the Populist ticket we would carry the nation by an immense majority...

The man who gives or offers bribes to juries, voters, or officials is the agent of the devil...

Put in from now until the national and state conventions meet on organizing. Never stop until a Populist club flaunts its banner to the breeze in every voting precinct. Populists must be represented on the board of election managers or be counted out...

The corruption of voters is one of the most serious questions now before the American people. He who offers a bribe is a meaner man and a worse enemy to liberty and patriotism than he who accepts. The one is a strong, the other a weak scoundrel...

If the farmer is not watchful, the weeds will choke out his small grain. So it is with the people in politics; it is a continual warfare against class legislation, which destroys all popular rights. Save the crop, farmers, or it will be useless to plant another year...

The earth is the primary source of subsistence. Labor the primary source of production. Transportation the means of distributing property. Money is the medium for exchanging values. These four propositions cover the whole field of human exertion. These principles are fundamental. All the rest are matters of detail...

It seems that the (Bourbon) Democrats are working to impress the Populists that their (the Populists) leaders have sold out. Surely no one will pay attention to this, it is done to weaken us and strengthen themselves of course. Could it be true... that we have sold (out) a party that promises so much to the people and is only the true party there is? No I say away with such an impression...

No, Democrats all we want is justice -- give it to us and we will be satisfied. We carried the parish, and will have the offices.

The following document is in the public domain and is available online at: [http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88071004/1896-06-05/ed-1/seq-1/](http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88071004/1896-06-05/ed-1/seq-1/)

Return to Grade 8 Social Studies: How to Navigate This Document
The early stages of railway development in America are shown by this set of maps. During the decade 1830-1840, the total length of completed railroad lines increased from 23 to 2,808 miles, and during the next ten years, more than 8,200 miles of railroad were opened, bringing the total network up to 9,021 miles in 1850. The most intensive growth during this period was in the Atlantic and Seaboard states. In 1850, a trip from Boston or New York to Chicago was made by rail and lake steamers or by stagecoaches, and required several days. One could travel all the way from Boston to Wilmington, North Carolina, by rail, with several changes of cars and a few ferry trips en route. During the first twenty years of railway development, covered by these maps, the population of the United States nearly doubled.
1860—This map shows the extent of railway development just prior to the Civil War. The decade 1850-1860 was a period of rapid railway expansion, characterized by the extension of many short, disjointed lines into important rail routes. This decade marked the beginning of railway development in the region west of the Mississippi River. By 1860, the "Iron Horse" had penetrated westward to the Missouri River and was beginning to make itself felt in Iowa, Arkansas, Texas, and California.
1870—Although the War Between the States temporarily halted railway development, many projects were resumed or initiated soon after the close of that conflict. The nation's network increased from 36,626 miles in 1860 to 52,922 miles in 1870. An outstanding development of the decade was the construction of the first railroad to the Pacific Ocean, making it possible for the first time to travel all the way across the country by rail. Railway development in the Mississippi and Missouri valleys was especially notable during this period.
1880 - In the ten-year period prior to 1880, some 40,000 miles of railroad were built, bringing the total network up to 93,267 miles. In 1880, every state and territory was provided with railway transportation. A second line of railroads to the Pacific was nearing completion, and other transcontinental railroads were under construction. Railway development was exerting a powerful influence upon immigration and agricultural and industrial growth throughout the country.
1890—The period from 1880 to 1890 was one of rapid expansion. More than 70,000 miles of new lines were opened in that decade, bringing the total network up to 163,597 miles. By 1890, several trunk line railroads extended to the Pacific. In thirty years from 1860 to 1890, the total mileage of the region west of the Mississippi River increased from 2,175 to 72,389, and the population of that area increased fourfold.
1950—Today, the American railroads embrace 224,511 miles of road and 397,232 miles of tracks. These railroads handle approximately 54 per cent of the commercial passenger and 61 per cent of the freight business of the nation, carry more than 97 per cent of the United States mail, and perform nearly all of the commercial express traffic of the nation. During World War II these railroads handled more than 90 per cent of the war freight and 97 per cent of the organized troop movements.
Analyze a Map

Meet the map.

What is the title? Is there a scale and compass?

What is in the legend?

Type (check all that apply):
- Political
- Exploration
- Land Use
- Census
- Topographic/Physical
- Survey
- Transportation
- Other
- Aerial/Satellite
- Natural Resource
- Military
- Relief (Shaded or Raised)
- Planning
- Population/Settlement

Observe its parts.

What place or places are shown?

What is labeled?

If there are symbols or colors, what do they stand for?

Who made it?

When is it from?

Try to make sense of it.

What was happening at the time in history this map was made?

Why was it created? List evidence from the map or your knowledge about the mapmaker that led you to your conclusion.

Write one sentence summarizing this map.

How does it compare to a current map of the same place?

Use it as historical evidence.

What did you find out from this map that you might not learn anywhere else?

What other documents or historical evidence are you going to use to help you understand this event or topic?
1902: Oil is discovered in Louisiana

By The Times-Picayune

on October 06, 2011 at 11:59 PM

The first successful oil well in Louisiana was drilled in Jennings in late 1901, spawning an industry that dominated the state for decades. The strike came about nine months after the massive Spindletop find in nearby Beaumont, Texas, set off oil fever throughout the Southwest.

A group of Jefferson Davis Parish businessmen went to Beaumont to recruit oilman W. Scott Heyward to drill a well at the site of a natural gas seep. The plan was to quit after drilling 1,000 feet. But undeterred by nervous investors, Heyward kept going until he was down to his last piece of drill pipe at 1,700 feet. Soon a four-inch geyser spewed from the well and Jennings was in full production by 1902.

By the late 1920s, the oil rush turned to south Louisiana. Tens of thousands of workers descended on the area from across the country, digging pipelines, erecting rigs and servicing wells.

Louisiana production nearly matched that of Texas just before World War II. Refineries sprung up, including the Humble Oil Co. refinery in Baton Rouge, still one of the largest in the world.

After fevered drilling in west and north Louisiana, the shallow marshes of South Louisiana became the center of the nation's oil production in the 1930s. Oil production on land and in state-controlled waters peaked in 1969. The state is the sixth largest producer today.

To get to the oil fields, canals were dredged through the marshes. Today, those canals are seen as a huge environmental blunder, as the spoil banks interrupt the natural flow of the water and the canals channel grass-killing salt water inland.
Mississippi River Flood of 1927 map

This image is in the public domain and is available online at https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/8c/1927_LA_Flood_Map.jpg.
Analyze a Map

Meet the map.
What is the title? Is there a scale and compass?

What is in the legend?

Type (check all that apply):
☐ Political  ☐ Topographic/Physical  ☐ Aerial/Satellite
☐ Exploration  ☐ Survey  ☐ Natural Resource
☐ Land Use  ☐ Transportation  ☐ Military
☐ Census  ☐ Other  ☐ Relief (Shaded or Raised)
☐ Planning  ☐ Population/Settlement

Observe its parts.
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How does it compare to a current map of the same place?

Use it as historical evidence.
What did you find out from this map that you might not learn anywhere else?

What other documents or historical evidence are you going to use to help you understand this event or topic?
The Flood of 1927 was described by U.S. Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover as "the greatest peace-time calamity in the history of the country." It inundated 16,570,627 acres (about 26,000 square miles) in 170 counties in seven states, driving an estimated 931,159 people from their homes. The Mississippi River remained at flood stage for a record 153 days. The flood caused more than $400,000,000 in losses; 92,431 businesses were damaged and 162,017 homes flooded. According to various estimates, there were between 250
and 500 flood-related deaths. In Louisiana alone, 10,000 square miles in 20 parishes went underwater. The congressional response to the devastation, the 1928 Flood Control Act, had far-reaching social, political, and physical consequences in Louisiana and throughout the Mississippi River valley.

The prelude to the flood began in August 1926, when rainstorms began to swell streams in eastern Kansas, northwestern Iowa, and part of Illinois, all of which fed into the Mississippi River. In December, heavy rains in Oklahoma, Arkansas, and northern Louisiana filled the Arkansas and Red rivers. During that fall, record rainfalls continued throughout the Mississippi River valley. By the end of January, major tributaries such as the Ohio River were overflowing their banks. In earlier times, this would not have been the problem it was in 1927; the Mississippi River and its tributaries once overflowed into natural drainage areas. But in the late 1800s, the Mississippi River Commission adopted a "levees-only" policy, which entailed the construction of levees that ran almost the full length of the river. While these levees prevented flooding for a period, they proved unable to withstand the floodwaters of 1927.

**Threat to New Orleans**

Through the early spring of 1927, the rains continued and the flood pushed downriver toward Louisiana. New Orleans received 11.16 inches of rain in February—compared to an average of 4.4 inches for the month—and steady rainfalls thereafter. Then, on Good Friday, April 15, 1927, more than 14 inches of rain fell on New Orleans in a single day, disabling the pumps that normally drained the city. The levees were not breached; river water did not rush in. Instead, the levees held the rainwater inside the city. That downpour also added more water to the Mississippi River as it rushed past New Orleans. The levees there were under pressure from both sides, and concerned citizens began to buy boats and stockpile food. As heavy rains continued in the Mississippi River drainage area above Louisiana, more than 20,000 men were put to work sandbagging levees between Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

The threat continued to worsen, however, and state government officials believed the levees would inevitably break. If the break happened below New Orleans, it would relieve pressure and spare the city from massive flooding. An upstream break, on the other hand, would send a disastrous flood into New Orleans. Despite strenuous objections from people living downstream, Governor O. H. Simpson and his advisors acquiesced to a plea from New Orleans civic leaders to blast a breach in the levee. This would give the flood a shortcut to the sea and drop the river level at New Orleans, at the cost of flooding further south. Engineers chose a westward loop in the river at Caernarvon and began blowing the levee apart on April 29. Over the next ten days they used thirty-nine tons of dynamite to open a channel that released 250,000 cubic feet of water per second from the river.

For two days before the dynamiting began the National Guard and major retailers from New Orleans sent convoys of trucks to evacuate the 10,000 residents whose homes and livelihoods would be washed away when the levee was breached. Most of the refugees went to stay with relatives. Those who had no place to go were brought to a warehouse in New Orleans. White people were housed on the fifth floor, black people on the sixth. All had been promised full compensation for their losses, but the lucky ones would get an average of only $274 each, and thousands of them would get nothing.

Part of that was because nobody realized how much would be washed away. The financial leaders from New Orleans estimated that claims against a fund set up to compensate the victims would be between $2 million and $6 million. Instead, they amounted to $275 million, and there wasn’t enough money to go around. Additionally, the fund had to bear the expense of feeding the refugees at a cost of $20,000 a week. Refugees had to file a claim to receive compensation under a complicated system that divided payments into various categories, provided that no partial payments could be made, and without legal representation.

The refugees were caught between a system of legalities they did not understand and marshes still filled with water that kept them from going home. Most settled for pennies on the dollar, and practically all of them
remembered that it was a man-made catastrophe that put them where they were. Adding to their anger, a natural breach of the levees subsequently eased pressure on the New Orleans levee; the blasting had been unnecessary. Though New Orleans had been spared, other parts of southern Louisiana were still in trouble, particularly in the Atchafalaya River and Bayou Teche basins to the west of the city.

**Inundation of Southern Louisiana**

The Atchafalaya River forks away from the Mississippi River at Simmesport in Avoyelles Parish. Though it and its tributaries were lined by levees, they were filled to overflowing, and part of the Mississippi River sought this shorter, straighter course to the sea. Smaller levees had begun to break in northern and central Louisiana in mid-May, but a disastrous break in the Atchafalaya River levee came on May 17 at Melville in St. Landry Parish. River water poured through the breach and began to rush to the south, soon joined by floodwaters caused by a break in a Bayou des Glaises levee to the north of St. Landry, in Avoyelles Parish.

The two floods met just north of Port Barre in St. Landry Parish on May 18. They combined to send an estimated 1.3 million cubic feet of water per second roaring to the south. The flood inundated Arnaudville at the St. Landry-St. Martin Parish line on May 19; Breaux Bridge and St. Martinville in St. Martin Parish two days later; then New Iberia and Jeanerette in Iberia Parish; and Franklin and Morgan City in St. Mary Parish. By the end of May, sixty thousand refugees were either in southern Louisiana camps or receiving Red Cross aid elsewhere. Thousands of cattle drowned and farm crops were wiped out as southern Louisiana turned into a lake 200 miles long and 50 to 100 miles wide. It was not until June that the floodwaters began to drain into the Gulf of Mexico.

Once again, housing had to be found for tens of thousands of refugees who had no relatives to stay with. The Red Cross and local relief organizations set up tent cities and makeshift housing in Marksville, Mansura, Baton Rouge, Opelousas, Crowley, New Iberia, and elsewhere. Some twenty thousand people were housed at Lafayette alone. Parishes set up “rehabilitation committees” to find food and shelter for the displaced families.

When the water finally subsided, the Red Cross provided seed, tools, and rations to farm families facing the daunting task of surviving the winter and starting a new crop in the spring. Some six hundred prefabricated cabins were sent to St. Martin Parish and more like them elsewhere to temporarily replace destroyed housing. At the end of August 1927, an anonymous Associated Press reporter touring the Teche region was able to write, “Little farmhouses, bearing brown watermarks at various heights according to the depth of the water reached, are once more occupied, and some of the farmers are plowing in preparation for new plantings. A few have crops already growing, and cane and corn are making a brave attempt to put forth fruit despite the late start given them.”

**Flood Policy Revision**

The Flood of 1927 showed that levees alone would not solve the problem of flooding on the Mississippi River and forced the federal government to reconsider its flood control policy. As a result, huge tracts of lowland, called spillways, were set aside in south central and southeastern Louisiana. Massive gates were constructed to allow excess water to be diverted into these areas in times of severe flooding. Whole communities, such as Bayou Chêne, built upon a ridge in the Atchafalaya River basin, had to be abandoned because they were in the path of the floodwaters that might be diverted.

The flood drove many tenant farmers, most of whom were African American, off their land and, in many cases, out of the region. They migrated by the thousands to Chicago, Detroit, and other northern cities, changing the urban landscape in those places. In addition, a stingy fiscal policy that offered little aid to the flood victim, implemented under Republican President Calvin Coolidge, drove many African Americans from the party of Lincoln into the Democratic party, where they continue to be a considerable part of the constituency today.
Since Hurricane Katrina inundated New Orleans and the parishes to its south, there have been inevitable comparisons between the two disasters. Each was caused more or less by a man-made breach of a levee. Each caused widespread dislocation of large numbers of people for many months. Each changed both the physical and political face of the region and played a role in national affairs. Criticism over the handling of Katrina contributed in large measure to the decision by Gov. Kathleen Blanco not to run for reelection in Baton Rouge, and in lesser degree to a change of party in the White House in Washington. The Flood of 1927 opened the door for the populist Huey Long to make his first successful run for the governor’s mansion and played a substantial role in the selection of his party’s candidate for the presidency. Both calamities caused widespread dislocation of black people, the first adding to a migration to the major urban cities of the North, the second to cities such as Houston and Atlanta. Both caused disruptions of life in southern Louisiana for thousands of people that arguably could be outranked only by the destruction caused during the Civil War.
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<th>Keywords/Quotations</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<td>Describe the environmental conditions which caused the Flood of 1927.</td>
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<td>Why did the Louisiana Government decide to blow up the levees south of New Orleans? How would people of south of New Orleans eventually politically react to this event?</td>
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<td>What is the economic, cultural, and political legacy of the Flood of 1927?</td>
<td></td>
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Return to [Grade 8 Social Studies: How to Navigate This Document](#)
TEACHER’S GUIDE
ANALYZING PHOTOGRAPHS & PRINTS

OBSERVE
Ask students to identify and note details.
Sample Questions:
Describe what you see. · What do you notice first? · What people and objects are shown? · How are they arranged? · What is the physical setting? · What, if any, words do you see? · What other details can you see?

REFLECT
Encourage students to generate and test hypotheses about the source.
Why do you think this image was made? · What’s happening in the image? · When do you think it was made? · Who do you think was the audience for this image? · What tools were used to create this? · What can you learn from examining this image? · If someone made this today, what would be different? · What would be the same?

QUESTION
Invite students to ask questions that lead to more observations and reflections.
What do you wonder about... who? · what? · when? · where? · why? · how?

FURTHER INVESTIGATION
Help students to identify questions appropriate for further investigation, and to develop a research strategy for finding answers.
Sample Question: What more do you want to know, and how can you find out?

A few follow-up activity ideas:
Beginning Write a caption for the image.
Intermediate Select an image. Predict what will happen one minute after the scene shown in the image. One hour after? Explain the reasoning behind your predictions.
Advanced Have students expand or alter textbook or other printed explanations of history based on images they study.

For more tips on using primary sources, go to http://www.loc.gov/teachers
Huey P. Long Jr.

(1893–1935)

Huey P. Long, nicknamed "The Kingfish," was the fortieth governor of Louisiana. Long was shot on September 8, 1935, in the Louisiana State Capitol (seen in the background) and died two days later. Learn more

Huey Long rose from ordinary beginnings in Winn Parish to become Louisiana's most notable politicians. Despite meager formal education, Long passed the state bar examination at age twenty-two and earned a laudable reputation with his legal defense of common folk. In 1918 he launched a political career that ultimately propelled him into the governorship. Long fashioned a powerful statewide political organization and embarked on a program laden with public works, popular reforms, and heavy elements of corruption. In 1932 Long became a US Senator and a major voice for the redistribution of wealth on the national scene. In 1935 he fell victim to an assassin's bullet.
Early Life

Long was born to Huey P. Long Sr. and his wife, Caledonia, in Winnfield on August 30, 1893. He attended public schools but never graduated. In 1910 he began a career as a traveling salesman in the Southwest, stopping briefly to attend the University of Oklahoma. In 1912 he married Rose McConnell. The couple had three children: Palmer Reed, Russell, and Rose. In 1915 Long attended Tulane University School of Law as a special student, passed the bar exam, and became an attorney. He then earned a solid reputation for his work on workers’ compensation cases and land and timber rights.

In 1918 Long ran successfully for the Louisiana Railroad Commission (renamed the Public Service Commission in 1921); four years later he became the commission’s chairman. Continuing to champion the causes of the common folk, Long sought lower rates from the utility companies and challenged corporate monopolies. In 1924 he campaigned unsuccessfully for governor on a platform of opposition to the Standard Oil Company, Governor John M. Parker, and traditional state politics. Observers contended that, despite a vigorous campaign that featured the extensive use of radio and sound trucks, Long’s failure to take a clear position on the Ku Klux Klan and a heavy rainstorm that kept potential voters at home caused his defeat.

The Governorship

In 1928 Long used tremendous energy, a populist appeal, and denunciation of the federal government’s inaction during the Mississippi River Flood of 1927 to win election to the governorship over Congressman Riley Wilson and O. H. Simpson. Long’s campaign, unlike the efforts of other contemporary southern politicians, was remarkably free of race baiting. In the state capital, the Kingfish, a nickname that Long expropriated from the popular Amos ‘n’ Andy radio program, pursued a progressive program that featured improved education for all ages, inexpensive natural gas for New Orleans, and wide-ranging public construction projects. Long also systematically removed his political foes from power and installed a new political hierarchy with himself at its head. In 1929 he sought innovative new taxes on the products of monopolistic oil companies, notably Standard Oil Corporation, an action that contributed directly to Long’s impeachment on various accusations from corruption to public profanity. The Kingfish, however, used his popularity with voters, brashness, and cunning legal scheming to evade the charges. The following year, Long created Louisiana Progress (later American Progress) to sidestep the newspapers that generally favored his opponents and convey his ideas straight to the voters.

Not all of Long’s plans, however, were successful. In 1930 state lawmakers defeated an impressive series of construction projects that Long favored. The Kingfish’s response was to campaign successfully for the US Senate with the assurance that he would not leave the governorship until his term concluded. Long feared that his departure would allow the lieutenant governor, a fierce enemy, to gain political leverage in Louisiana. The Kingfish subsequently crafted a temporary partnership with his one-time rivals in the New Orleans Regular Democratic Organization (commonly referred to as “Old Regulars”), a powerful political group led by New Orleans Mayor T. Semmes Walmsley. This alliance made it possible for Long’s construction plans to move forward. Building plans for a new Louisiana State Capitol and a governor’s mansion, now known as the Old Louisiana Governor’s Mansion, were soon underway. Plans for road construction and increased spending on education, to be funded by a new gas tax, were not far behind. Special support went to Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Long’s favorite institution. In late 1931, Long used his control over the state court system to remove the lieutenant governor and place Oscar K. Allen, his longtime friend and business partner, in the vacant office. With the state firmly under control, Long resigned the governorship and left for Washington in January 1932.

The US Senate

In the nation’s capital, Long declared himself a maverick. He resigned from all of his committee assignments and attacked both major political parties for their failure to redistribute wealth and resolve the problems of the
Great Depression. In 1932 Long vigorously backed the presidential candidacy of Franklin D. Roosevelt and campaigned for him in the North. The Kingfish also campaigned for Hattie Caraway in Arkansas, using his widespread popularity and powerful speaking voice in an energetic seven-day assault on Louisiana’s neighboring state. With his help, she became the first woman elected to the US Senate.

In 1933 the Kingfish broke with Roosevelt, contending that the president’s plans did not adequately help the nation’s poor or reallocate wealth. Long began to criticize various New Deal programs, including the Glass-Steagall Banking Act and the National Recovery Administration. He also aligned himself with the more isolationist, liberal wing of the Senate that included Gerald Nye, George Norris, and Burton K. Wheeler. Roosevelt, believing Long to be a dangerous demagogue, started to channel federal recovery revenues and political favors toward the Kingfish’s enemies. The president also challenged the honesty of electoral results in Louisiana and instructed agents of the Internal Revenue Service to look into the income sources of Long and his associates.

While Long continued his battle with the president, he frequently visited Louisiana and used loyal operatives to preserve his influence at home. Through his personal power and the employment of surrogates, he secured an end to the poll tax and created a homestead exemption. He also increased corporate levies and expanded the size and authority of state government. His foes in both Louisiana and Washington increasingly contended that Long was attaining the power and the demeanor of a dictator. Comparisons with Hitler and Mussolini abounded.

Share Our Wealth

In 1934 Long inaugurated the Share Our Wealth Society (SOWS), a national group that sought the legal confiscation of all annual incomes totaling more than $1 million and all personal fortunes topping $5 million. He intended to use the resultant revenue to provide all American citizens with free education, homes, radios, and automobiles. His plan also included a guaranteed minimum income for all citizens, including African Americans, and a pension for the elderly. Under the guidance of the Reverend Gerald L. K. Smith, a skilled organizer and captivating orator, SOWS branches spread across the country. In 1935 Smith and Long boasted that the organization had more than 7 million members and 27,000 chapters throughout the United States. Many observers contended that SOWS forced the president to move his administration toward the political left with the passage of the Social Security Act and the establishment of the Works Progress Administration.

Death and Legacy

While rumors persisted that Long would attempt to defeat Roosevelt in the 1936 presidential election, the Kingfish continued to dominant politics in his home state. In September 1935, he went to Louisiana to supervise a special legislative session that would provide him with even greater political and governmental control. On the night of September 8, 1935, Dr. Carl Austin Weiss, a political enemy with unclear motives, shot Long in a rear corridor of the new state capitol. Long died on the morning of September 10, 1935.

Huey Long altered Louisiana politics forever. For three decades after his death, Louisianians debated the value of his achievements and voted accordingly. Through the 1960s, state politics were split between Longism and Anti-Longism factions. His national impact was more mercurial. Although Long attracted many supporters throughout the country with his brash economic proposals and brazen behavior, his achievements were few. Many contended that Long deserved to become president, but his death pushed those prospects, and his lofty ambitions, into the fanciful domain of unrealized promise and endless conjecture.

Author: Edward F. Haas
Great Depression in Louisiana

(1929–1940)

Ben Shahn took this 1935 photograph of a strawberry picker in rural Louisiana. Learn more

The Great Depression is widely attributed to the ongoing post–World War I economic malaise that engulfed Europe and the rest of the globe during the 1920s. In the United States, however, the dazzling growth of new technologies and the rapid advance of consumerism during the Jazz Age suggested that America was somehow immune to the chaos of the outside world. Yet protectionist trade policies, unchecked speculation, declining real wages, and the crisis of overproduction in industry and agriculture combined to undermine the soundness of the American economy by the end of the decade.

These profound structural problems periodically revealed themselves, most notably with the real estate busts in California and Florida during the mid-1920s. In the popular mind, though, they seemed to crest all at once with the October 1929 collapse of the stock market, which fell to pieces after a remarkable yearlong run. By the end of the month, it had lost an estimated 40 percent of its total value. Although rallying somewhat in early 1930, which gave President Herbert Hoover and the investing classes a glimmer of hope, the market quickly resumed its disastrous slide, reaching a low in the summer of 1932, just before the presidential election that fall. It would not recover to its pre-Depression levels until the 1950s.
The shocking losses in the stock market soon rippled out into the wider economy, with more than 1,300 banks failing during 1930 alone. In a larger sense, though, the disintegration on Wall Street simply reflected the slow-moving nightmare that was the national economy. More than 26,000 businesses failed in 1930, followed by even more in 1931 and 1932, the highest per capita bankruptcy rates in American business history. Private investment in manufacturing dropped more than 80 percent, while foreign trade fell by 70 percent. By 1933, the US gross national product had been sliced by more than half from its 1929 peak, with the physical output of American industry falling to 1913 levels. In short, within three years, all the gains of the World War I years and the 1920s had been completely erased.

**Depression-Era Louisiana**

As a mostly agricultural state in the Deep South, Louisiana was greatly affected by the slumping economy, especially as farm prices declined to unheard-of lows. Cotton, for instance, dropped to less than five cents a pound, sugar to less than four. The value of the state’s other leading commodities—timber, oil, and rice—experienced a similar erosion. Although the vast majority of the rural population already lived in grinding poverty, the worsening conditions of the Depression pushed even these people to extremes. Further, the calamitous 1927 Mississippi River flood and the 1930–31 drought had displaced tens of thousands of farm laborers and their families (and many more from neighboring states), most of whom had yet to find a settled place in Louisiana society.

Traveling through Tensas Parish in the fall of 1933, relief fieldworker Lucille Watson found one of these families living in a plantation shack, the walls of which were “one big crack” that had been pasted over with old catalogue pages and newspaper to keep the “wind and the rain from blowing into the house as much.” Elsewhere, she found another migrant family with a mother who was “depressed and miserable over their present condition” and children who “looked more or less sick and puny.” In other cases, Watson stumbled upon families with only a few bushels of sweet potatoes to last the winter season. Hard times, then, abounded in the state’s rural areas. Even the upper classes, planters and large landowners, faced difficult prospects as farm income declined by two-thirds between 1929 and 1932. Many could not pay their taxes or keep up with their mortgages, eventually losing everything to the dreaded sheriff’s sale or to foreclosure by insurance companies and banks.

Yet rural distress hardly accounted for all of the suffering during the Depression years in Louisiana. The oil and natural gas industry, though more resilient than manufacturing, nonetheless endured a slowdown in production that necessitated cutbacks and layoffs. Still, the oil business proved a bulwark of sorts for the state’s economy throughout the 1930s, especially after a true recovery had gotten under way by 1934–35. Baton Rouge, home of the Standard Oil refinery and associated plants, continued to expand during the decade, as did Shreveport and Monroe, both nestled in the midst of vast petroleum fields.

New Orleans, however, experienced some of the worst aspects of the Depression in the state, more akin to the anguish felt in the metropolises of the North than in the city’s rural hinterlands. The South’s largest urban center in 1930, and still one of the nation’s biggest ports, New Orleans came face to face with the specter of the Depression almost immediately. With the precipitous decline in foreign trade, New Orleans’s warehouses emptied and its docks fell silent; the army of stevedores and handlers that serviced America’s, and the world’s, agricultural and industrial production, lay idle. By early 1930, in fact, one census counted at least 10,000 unemployed workers in the city, although the true figure was probably much higher. To handle the pressures of public relief, the city formed a Welfare Committee in early 1931 and raised more than a half million dollars from private sources. When this money ran out in 1932, municipal leaders floated a $750,000 bond issue, but this likewise proved insufficient to deal with the mass of the unemployed and their families.

Yet, on the whole, Louisiana perhaps suffered less than other parts of the nation. The state’s governor, and later U.S. senator, Huey Long, had made a commitment to infrastructure development when he took office in 1928, and his willingness to expend millions of dollars on massive construction projects blunted the full force
of the national collapse, while also foreshadowing the thrust of the New Deal itself a few years later. Without the benefit of economic advisors or political scientists, Long instinctively pressed for increased spending in all areas of state government to stimulate economic growth. He built roads, bridges, and public facilities at an amazing clip and bolstered public education through the distribution of free textbooks, teacher pay raises, and adult literacy programs. Between 1928 and 1932, in fact, Long spent more than the previous three state administrations combined.

Oddly enough, though, public relief was not something that Huey Long ever endorsed, or ever really was forced to support. His early construction program poured money into public works projects that provided employment opportunities for many laborers around the state, while after about 1931, when he began to move into the national political picture, he cared more about maintaining his base of power in Louisiana than providing for his constituents. Local sources of public charity carried much of the load through then. In fact, churches, social clubs, benevolent societies, and other private sources had contributed more than 98 percent of all welfare expenditures in the state that year. And by the time these sources began to give out, even the Republican administration of Herbert Hoover had seen the necessity of a national relief program.

The Depression Lifts

Beginning with Hoover’s issuance of federal loans to the states in the late summer of 1932, a more regular approach to relief took shape. Between October 1932 and May 1933, Governor O.K. Allen’s administration paid out $6.5 million in these funds while handling approximately 115,000 cases a month. Once Franklin D. Roosevelt took office as president in March 1933, this system was reorganized under the control of the Federal Emergency Relief Agency (FERA). Following this, federal dollars flowed into the state at an impressive rate and, although often manipulated at the local level, nonetheless made a powerful impact on the state’s relief problems. Later, after Long’s death in 1935, an even greater amount of money cascaded into Louisiana for projects that eventually employed thousands of blue- and white-collar workers.

With the onset of the federal relief and recovery programs known collectively as the “New Deal,” the Depression in Louisiana transformed into something less desperate, less purely terrifying. Although poverty and underemployment continued to mark the lives of many of the state’s working-class families up until the onset of World War II, the crisis situation of the early 1930s had abated. Indeed, among many Louisianaans, the latter half of the decade emerged from the haze of memory as something of a golden era, a time of common purpose and feverish activity that saw major architectural undertakings and an outpouring of the arts. Among these were the restoration of the French Market in New Orleans and the building of the Louisiana State Exhibit Museum in Shreveport, as well as the creation in public venues of a wide variety of murals celebrating Louisiana history and life and the production of the richly detailed Louisiana and New Orleans guidebooks under the direction of noted author Lyle Saxon. Yet, if one takes the time to read the deep anxiety and fear that permeated Louisiana newspapers and private correspondence during the early years of the Depression, one is reminded that this was indeed America’s most perilous time.

Author: Matthew Reonas
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<thead>
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<th>Keywords/Quotations</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Describe life in Louisiana during the Great Depression.</td>
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<td>How did Huey Long help Louisiana residents during the Great Depression?</td>
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Political Cartoon of Huey Long's Textbook Program

A cartoon from Huey Long's Louisiana Progress newspaper depicts how children were sent home if they did not have the required textbooks.

Some of Huey Long's Work

![Cartoon Image]

Image available online at: http://www.hueylong.com/programs/education.php

Return to Grade 8 Social Studies: How to Navigate This Document
TEACHER'S GUIDE
ANALYZING POLITICAL CARTOONS

OBSERVE
Ask students to identify and note details.
Sample Questions:
- What do you see? • What do you notice first?
- What people and objects are shown? • What, if any, words do you see? • What do you see that looks different than it would in a photograph?
- What do you see that might refer to another work of art or literature? • What do you see that might be a symbol?
- What other details can you see?

REFLECT
Encourage students to generate and test hypotheses about the source.
What's happening in this cartoon? • What was happening when this cartoon was made? • Who do you think was the audience for this cartoon? • What issue do you think this cartoon is about? • What do you think the cartoonist's opinion on this issue is?
What methods does the cartoonist use to persuade the audience?

QUESTION
Invite students to ask questions that lead to more observations and reflections.
What do you wonder about...
who? • what? • when? • where? • why? • how?

FURTHER INVESTIGATION
Help students to identify questions appropriate for further investigation, and to develop a research strategy for finding answers.
Sample Question: What more do you want to know, and how can you find out?

A few follow-up activity ideas:
Beginning
Think about the point the cartoonist was trying to make with this cartoon. Were you persuaded? Why or why not?

Advanced
Select a political cartoon. Think about the point of view of the cartoonist. Describe or draw how the cartoon might be different if it had been created by a cartoonist with a different point of view.

Intermediate
Compare two political cartoons that are on the same side of an issue. Identify the different methods — like symbols, allusions, or exaggeration — that the two cartoons use to persuade their audience.

For more tips on using primary sources, go to
http://www.loc.gov/teachers
Postcard of Louisiana State Capitol Building and the Huey P. Long Bridge

Excerpts from Huey Long’s “Every Man a King” Speech

It is not the difficulty of the problem which we have; it is the fact that the rich people of this country—and by rich people I mean the super-rich—will not allow us to solve the problems, or rather the one little problem that is afflicting this country, because in order to cure all of our woes it is necessary to scale down the big fortunes, that we may scatter the wealth to be shared by all of the people.

Is that right of life, my friends, when the young children of this country are being reared into a sphere which is more owned by 12 men than it is by 120 million people?

But the Scripture says, ladies and gentlemen, that no country can survive, or for a country to survive it is necessary that we keep the wealth scattered among the people, that nothing should be held permanently by any one person, and that fifty years seems to be the year of jubilee in which all property would be scattered about and returned to the sources from which it originally came, and every seventh year debt should be remitted.

So, we have in America today, my friends, a condition by which about ten men dominate the means of activity in at least 85 percent of the activities that you own. They either own directly everything or they have got some kind of mortgage on it, with a very small percentage to be excepted. They own the banks, they own the steel mills, they own the railroads, they own the bonds, they own the mortgages, they own the stores, and they have chained the country from one end to the other until there is not any kind of business that a small, independent man could go into today and make a living, and there is not any kind of business that an independent man can go into and make any money to buy an automobile with; and they have finally and gradually and steadily eliminated everybody from the fields in which there is a living to be made, and still they have got little enough sense to think they ought to be able to get more business out of it anyway.

It is necessary to save the government of the country, but is much more necessary to save the people of America. Now, we have organized a society, and we call it “Share Our Wealth Society,” a society with the motto “every man a king.” Every man a king, so there would be no such thing as a man or woman who did not have the necessities of life, who would not be dependent upon the whims and caprices and ipse dixit of the financial martyrs for a living. What do we propose by this society? We propose to limit the wealth of big men in the country. . . . We do not propose to divide it up equally. We do not propose a division of wealth, but we propose to limit poverty that we will allow to be inflicted upon any man’s family. We will not say we are going to try to guarantee any equality, or $15,000 to families. No; but we do say that one third of the average is low enough for any one family to hold, that there should be a guaranty of a family wealth of around $5,000; enough for a home, an automobile, a radio, and the ordinary conveniences, and the opportunity to educate their children. . . . We have to limit fortunes. Our present plan is that we will allow no one man to own more than $50 million. . . . Another thing we propose is old-age pension of $30 a month for everyone that is sixty years old.

We will limit hours of work. There is not any necessity of having overproduction. I think all you have got to do, ladies and gentlemen, is just limit the hours of work to such an extent as people will work only so long as is necessary to produce enough for all of the people to have what they need.

Return to Grade 8 Social Studies: How to Navigate This Document
We will not have any trouble taking care of the agricultural situation. All you have to do is balance your production with your consumption. You simply have to abandon a particular crop that you have too much of, and all you have to do is store the surplus for the next year, and the government will take it over.

Get together in your community tonight or tomorrow and organize one of our Share Our Wealth societies. If you do not understand it, write me and let me send you the platform; let me give you the proof of it. We have got a little button that some of our friends designed, with our message around the rim of the button, and in the center “Every man a king.” . . .

Share Our Wealth societies are now being organized, and people have it within their power to relieve themselves from this terrible situation.

**SOAPSTone**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>As you read, look for these details...</th>
<th>How do you know? Cite specific evidence from the text.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **S**  
Who is the Speaker?  
- What can you tell or what do you know about the speaker that helps you understand the point of view expressed? | |
| **O**  
What is the Occasion?  
- What is the time and place of the text? What caused this text to be written? Identify the context of the text. | |
| **A**  
Who is the Audience?  
- To whom is this text addressed? Does the speaker specify an audience? What does the author assume about the intended audience? | |
| **P**  
What is the Purpose?  
- What did the author want the audience to think or do as a result of reading this text?  
  Why did the author write it?  
- What is the message? How does the speaker convey this message? | |
| **S**  
What is the Subject?  
- What topic, content, and ideas are included in the text?  
- How does the author present the subject? Does he introduce it immediately or do you, the reader, have to make an inference? | |
| **T**  
What is the Tone?  
- What is the author’s attitude about the subject? Is the author emotional? Objective? Angry? How would you read the passage aloud if you were the author?  
- What details “tell” the author’s feelings about the topic? What words, phrases, imagery, examples, etc. reveal the tone? | |

Return to Grade 8 Social Studies: How to Navigate This Document
Overview of Huey Long's Share Our Wealth Plan

Here is the whole sum and substance of the share-our-wealth movement:

1. Every family to be furnished by the Government a homestead allowance, free of debt, of not less than one-third the average family wealth of the country, which means, at the lowest, that every family shall have the reasonable comforts of life up to a value of from $5,000 to $6,000. No person to have a fortune of more than 100 to 300 times the average family fortune, which means that the limit to fortunes is between $1,500,000 and $5,000,000, with annual capital levy taxes imposed on all above $1,000,000.

2. The yearly income of every family shall be not less than one-third of the average family income, which means that, according to the estimates of the statisticians of the United States Government and Wall Street, no family's annual income would be less than from $2,000 to $2,500. No yearly income shall be allowed to any person larger than from 100 to 300 times the size of the average family income, which means that no person would be allowed to earn in any year more than from $600,000 to $1,800,000, all to be subject to present income-tax laws.

3. To limit or regulate the hours of work to such an extent as to prevent overproduction; the most modern and efficient machinery would be encouraged, so that as much would be produced as possible so as to satisfy all demands of the people, but to also allow the maximum time to the workers for recreation, convenience, education, and luxuries of life.

4. An old-age pension to the persons over 60.

5. To balance agricultural production with what can be consumed according to the laws of God, which includes the preserving and storage of surplus commodities to be paid for and held by the Government for the emergencies when such are needed. Please bear in mind, however, that when the people of America have had money to buy things they needed, we have never had a surplus of any commodity. This plan of God does not call for destroying any of the things raised to eat or wear, nor does it countenance wholesale destruction of hogs, cattle, or milk.

6. To pay the veterans of our wars what we owe them and to care for their disabled.

7. Education and training for all children to be equal in opportunity in all schools, colleges, universities, and other institutions for training in the professions and vocations of life; to be regulated on the capacity of children to learn, and not on the ability of parents to pay the costs. Training for life's work to be as much universal and thorough for all walks in life as has been the training in the arts of killing.

8. The raising of revenue and taxes for the support of this program to come from the reduction of swollen fortunes from the top, as well as for the support of public works to give employment whenever there may be any slackening necessary in private enterprise.


Return to Grade 8 Social Studies: How to Navigate This Document
New Deal, the domestic program of the administration of U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt between 1933 and 1939, which took action to bring about immediate economic relief as well as reforms in industry, agriculture, finance, waterpower, labour, and housing, vastly increasing the scope of the federal government’s activities. The term was taken from Roosevelt’s speech accepting the Democratic nomination for the presidency on July 2, 1932. Reacting to the ineffectiveness of the administration of President Herbert Hoover in meeting the ravages of the Great Depression, American voters the following November overwhelmingly voted in favour of the Democratic promise of a “new deal” for the “forgotten man.” Opposed to the traditional American political philosophy of laissez-faire, the New Deal generally embraced the concept of a government-regulated economy aimed at achieving a balance between conflicting economic interests. Much of the New Deal legislation was enacted within the first three months of Roosevelt’s presidency, which became known as the Hundred Days. The new administration’s first objective was to alleviate the suffering of the nation’s huge number of unemployed workers. Such agencies as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) were established to dispense emergency and short-term governmental aid and
to provide temporary jobs, employment on construction projects, and youth
work in the national forests. Before 1935 the New Deal focused on
revitalizing the country’s stricken business and agricultural communities. To
revive industrial activity, the National Recovery Administration (NRA) was
granted authority to help shape industrial codes governing trade practices,
wages, hours, child labour, and collective bargaining. The New Deal also
tried to regulate the nation’s financial hierarchy in order to avoid a repetition
of the stock market crash of 1929 and the massive bank failures that
followed. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) granted
government insurance for bank deposits in member banks of the Federal
Reserve System, and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) was
formed to protect the investing public from fraudulent stock-market practices.
The farm program was centred in the Agricultural Adjustment Administration
(AAA), which attempted to raise prices by controlling the production of
staple crops through cash subsidies to farmers. In addition, the arm of the
federal government reached into the area of electric power, establishing in
1933 the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), which was to cover a seven-
state area and supply cheap electricity, prevent floods, improve navigation,
and produce nitrates.

In 1935 the New Deal emphasis shifted to measures designed to assist labour
and other urban groups. The Wagner Act of 1935 greatly increased the
authority of the federal government in industrial relations and strengthened
the organizing power of labour unions, establishing the National Labor
Relations Board (NLRB) to execute this program. To aid the “forgotten”
homeowner, legislation was passed to refinance shaky mortgages and
guarantee bank loans for both modernization and mortgage payments.
Perhaps the most far-reaching programs of the entire New Deal were the
Social Security measures enacted in 1935 and 1939, providing old-age and
widows’ benefits, unemployment compensation, and disability insurance.
Maximum work hours and minimum wages were also set in certain industries
in 1938.

Certain New Deal laws were declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme
Court on the grounds that neither the commerce nor the taxing provisions of
the Constitution granted the federal government authority to regulate industry
or to undertake social and economic reform. Roosevelt, confident of the
legality of all the measures, proposed early in 1937 a reorganization of the
court. This proposal met with vehement opposition and ultimate defeat, but
the court meanwhile ruled in favour of the remaining contested legislation.
Despite resistance from business and other segments of the community to
“socialistic” tendencies of the New Deal, many of its reforms gradually
achieved national acceptance. Roosevelt’s domestic programs were largely
followed in the Fair Deal of President Harry S. Truman (1945–53), and both
major U.S. parties came to accept most New Deal reforms as a permanent
part of the national life.
Share Our Wealth and New Deal Venn Diagram

Huey Long’s Share Our Wealth Plan

Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal