

### Overview

In the 1930s Kansans experienced the compounded effects of the depression and the Dust Bowl. New Deal programs were implemented to combat these problems. In this lesson students will study one New Deal program, Rural Electrification Administration (REA). Students will use the SOAP (source, occasion, audience, purpose) graphic organizer with historic images to understand the cause and effect of the REA program on Kansas life. This lesson is designed to take one class period.

### Standards

#### History:

Benchmark 5, Indicator 4: The student summarizes the effects of New Deal programs on Kansas life.

#### Reading:

Benchmark 4, Indicator 5: The student uses information from the text to make inferences and draw conclusions.

#### Common Core Reading:

RI. 7.1: The student cites several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

#### Writing:

Benchmark 2, Indicator 1: The student develops one main idea and/or a thesis statement in response to a prompt.

#### Common Core Writing:

WHST 6-8.1(a-e): The student writes arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

### Objectives

#### Content:

- The student will be able to identify three ways the Rural Electrification Administration changed life in rural Kansas.

#### Skills:

- The student will be able to observe and infer information from historical photographs.
- The student will be able to explain the cause and effect of the REA program on rural Kansans.

### Essential Questions

- Why was it necessary to have the federal government provide electricity to rural America?
- How did the REA change life in rural Kansas?

## Activities

This activity uses the following *Read Kansas!* cards:

- **Stringing Lines in Brown County**
- **Household 1**
- **Household 2**
- **Household 3**
- **Household 4**
- **Household 5**
- **Farming 1**
- **Farming 2**
- **Farming 3**
- **Farming 4**
- **Farming 5**

### Day 1

1. Brainstorm the ways electricity is used today and how it impacts our lives. For example, electric lights allow us to work after dark. Air conditioners provide for a comfortable work environment during the hot Kansas summers.
2. Provide a brief overview of life in rural Kansas in the 1930s and the history of the Rural Electrification Administration. See *For the Teacher* for this information.
3. There are 11 *Read Kansas!* cards in this lesson. Students will use the cards to learn about the cause and effect of rural electrification in Kansas.
4. Begin by modeling how to use the SOAP method to read a primary source using **Stringing Lines in Brown County** *Read Kansas!* card.
  - a. Display the image so everyone can see it. Do not provide any information about the photograph.
  - b. Give students time to examine the picture and then ask the following questions in order and have students answer them. Often questions lead to more questions. Encourage this critical thinking skill and brainstorm where the answers can be found (i.e., diaries, letters, other images, textbooks, websites, etc.)
    - S** = What kind of source is this? (Picture, political cartoon, newspaper article, letter, etc.)
    - O** = What's the occasion? (What is happening in the primary source?)
    - A** = Who is the audience? (Who do you think was intended to see this, if anyone?)
    - P** = What is the purpose of the document? (What was the creator's purpose in making this primary source? Why was it created?)
  - c. When you are finished reading the image on the front of the card, read the information on the back to students. What else have they learned? Explain that this information is from the donor of the photograph and/or from research using other primary and secondary sources.
5. Next, arrange students in pair groups. Provide each student with a **SOAP** worksheet.
  - a. Each pair will be responsible for reading two images, one **Household** *Read Kansas!* card and one **Farming** *Read Kansas!* card. Have them read only the front of the card and complete the **SOAP** worksheet.

- b. When they are done reading the front of the card, they should read the label on the back and add any new information to the label information line on their worksheets.
6. When they have finished, bring the class back together for a discussion. There are two discussion questions below. Students should use information from their worksheets to support their answers. Display image on front of card as appropriate during the discussion.
- a. Why did the federal government provide electricity to rural America beginning in the 1930s?
- Stringing lines provided work for out of work laborers.
  - Raised the standard of living for people in rural areas to be more similar to urban areas.
  - Private businesses were not eager to serve the rural population because they didn't think it was profitable.
- b. What were the immediate effects of rural electrification? What were the long-term effects on the lives of rural Americans?
- Short term:
    - Provided jobs for men during the Great Depression
    - Women had a cleaner cooking source. Electric oven versus coal or wood-burning stove.
    - Electric lights allowed people to have better light after dark. It was also cleaner and safer than oil lamps.
    - Invention of new toys for children, such as electric train sets.
    - Electric sewing machines were easier to operate and faster than treadle machines.
    - Refrigeration allowed food to be preserved for a longer time period. It also saved time and energy since men no longer had to cut ice from ponds in the winter.
    - Electric motors replaced steam engines fueled by coal or wood. Electric engines were also smaller and could be used with a number of devices.
  - Long term:
    - Electrical appliances in the home were promoted as “time saving.” In fact women became busier as the standard of cleanliness increased and as women became more involved in activities outside the home.
    - Electrical devices on the farm resulted in many changes. In some cases the work was totally eliminated, such as ice cutters. In other cases the number of men needed to do the job was reduced, such as harvesting and threshing grain or milking cows.
    - Farms could also grow in size thus reducing the number of family farms needed to produce the same amount of grain and livestock.
7. As an exit ticket, students should write a one-paragraph answer to the following question and provide two examples to support their answer, “In your opinion, what was the greatest benefit of rural electrification and why?”
8. Extended activity. Invite a guest speaker who can share personal experiences about this time before and after rural electrification.

## Assessment

- Evaluate the students' ability to complete the SOAP worksheet.
- Evaluate the students' ability to answer the exit ticket question and provide two examples to support their answer.

## For the Teacher

If you are using the textbook, *The Kansas Journey*, this lesson can be used with pages 232-235. Other primary sources are available at [kansasmemory.org](http://kansasmemory.org).

In 1933 about 25 percent of workers in the United States were unable to find work during the Great Depression. Kansas was no different. Kansas farmers were impacted by another force, too. Hot, dry winds were blowing the topsoil from fields in the Great Plains. Too little rain combined with intensive farming practices caused the Dust Bowl. Kansans had to deal with both of these problems.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt started a series of relief programs. These programs were known as the New Deal. The first series of New Deal programs began in 1933. Most of these programs were known by the initials of their long names. People joked about the "alphabet soup" of programs.

A second phase of the New Deal took place between 1934 and 1936. One program started at this time was the Rural Electrification Administration (REA). Before 1935 only 10 percent of rural Americans had electricity. This caused serious problems for farmers. It kept them from modernizing their farms. For some it meant living in unhealthy conditions. Most rural homes lacked adequate heat, had no running water, had limited means to keep stored food from spoiling, and were equipped with outhouses instead of indoor plumbing.

Private utility companies, which provided power to urban areas, did not want to undertake this project. These companies claimed it was unprofitable to serve rural areas. In order to provide electricity to rural America, the REA made loans to state and local governments, to farmer's cooperatives, and to nonprofit organizations; no loans were made directly to consumers.

By the early 1970s about 98 percent of all farms in the United States had electric service. The first rural electrical line in Kansas was in Brown County.

### Answers:

**Stringing Lines in Brown County** *Read Kansas!* card

**S** = What kind of source is this? *Historic photograph*

**O** = What's the occasion? *Men are climbing poles. They are stringing electrical wire from the back of a truck.*

**A** = Who is the audience? *Not completely sure but probably the local government agency or farm cooperative that provided the funding for the project.*

**P** = What is the purpose of the document? *To illustrate something new and important happening in their community.*

**Label Information:** *Workers from the Rural Electrification Administration installing lines and poles in Brown County, Kansas. This was the first rural electrical line in Kansas. 1938.*

The materials in this packet may be reproduced for classroom use only. Reproduction of these materials for any other use is prohibited without written permission of the Kansas Historical Society.

Resources for this lesson are from:

- Kansas Historical Society collections
- Library of Congress

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## SOAP worksheet

1. Name of image: \_\_\_\_\_

**S** = What kind of source is this? (Picture, political cartoon, newspaper article, letter, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_

**O** = What's the occasion? (What is happening in the primary source?)

\_\_\_\_\_

**A** = Who is the audience? (Who do you think was intended to see this, if anyone?)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**P** = What is the purpose of the document? (What was the creator's purpose in making this primary source? Why was it created?) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Label Information: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Name of image: \_\_\_\_\_

**S** = What kind of source is this? (Picture, political cartoon, newspaper article, letter, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_

**O** = What's the occasion? (What is happening in the primary source?)

\_\_\_\_\_

**A** = Who is the audience? (Who do you think was intended to see this, if anyone?)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**P** = What is the purpose of the document? (What was the creator's purpose in making this primary source? Why was it created?) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Label Information: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_