



History

GCSE

History B Source Pack

The USA 1919–1941

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ENQUIRY: HOW WEALTHY WAS THE USA AS A RESULT OF WORLD WAR I?

- **The USA in the aftermath of World War I.**

We are not internationalists, we are American nationalists.

Source 1 – Theodore Roosevelt, speaking in 1919

We have entangled ourselves with all European concerns ... dabbling in their affairs. In other words, we have surrendered, once and for all, the great policy of “no entangling alliances” upon which this Republic has been founded for 150 years. [Acting according to the decisions of a League] is in conflict with the right of our people to govern themselves free from all restraint of foreign powers....

A real republic can not commingle with the discordant and destructive forces of the Old World. You can not yoke a government of liberty to a government whose first law is that of force. India, sweltering in ignorance and burdened with inhuman taxes after more than one hundred years of dominant rule; Egypt, trapped and robbed of her birthright; Ireland, with 700 years of sacrifice for independence – this is the atmosphere in and under which we are to keep alive our belief in democracy.

Source 2 – Borah, a Republican Senator and isolationist, speaking to the Senate

The stage is set, the destiny disclosed. It has come about by no plan of our conceiving, but by the hand of God. We cannot turn back. The light streams on the path ahead, and nowhere else.

Source 3 – Wilson’s speech to Congress (10 July 1919)

Contemptible, narrow, selfish, poor little minds that never get anywhere but run around in a circle and think they are going somewhere.

Source 4 – Wilson speaking in 1919 about supporters of isolationism

If ever there was a time when Americans had anything to fear from foreign competition, that time has passed. If we wish to have Europe settle her debts, governmental or commercial, we must be prepared to buy from her.

Source 5 – Woodrow Wilson, speaking in March 1921 having just vetoed the Emergency Tariff Bill

ENQUIRY: WERE THE 1920s GOOD TIMES FOR EVERYONE IN THE USA?

- **American society and economy in the 1920s – “Roaring Twenties” and increased standard of living,**
- **consumerism,**
- **mass production,**
- **who benefitted including race relations,**
- **prohibition,**
- **economic prosperity,**
- **role of US government,**
- **underlying weaknesses,**
- **gangsterism and corruption.**

‘The business of America is business.’ ‘The man who builds a factory, builds a temple. The man who works there, worships there.’

Source 6 – Words from President Coolidge

We in America today are nearer to the financial triumph over poverty than ever before in the history of our land. The poor man is vanishing from us. Under the Republican system, our industrial output has increased as never before, and our wages have grown steadily in buying power.

Source 7 – President Hoover, speaking in 1928

In 1929 it was strictly a gambling casino with loaded dice. I saw shoeshine boys buying 50 000 dollars worth of stock with 500 dollars down payment. A cigar stock at the time was selling for 114 dollars a share. The market collapsed. The 114 dollar stock dropped to two dollars, and the company president jumped out of the window of his Wall Street office.

Source 8 – Studs Terkel, in an interviewer in 1970

We are quick to adopt the latest time and labour saving devices in business. The modern woman has an equal right to employ in her home the most popular electric cleaner: The Frantz Premier: Over 250,000 are in use. We have branches and dealers everywhere. Our price is modest – time payments if desire.

Source 9 – An advert for a vacuum cleaner

One of the oldest and perhaps the noblest of human activities has been the abolition of poverty... we in America today are nearer to the final triumph over poverty than ever before in the history of any land.

Source 10 – Herbert Hoover speaking in 1928

Jazz employs primitive rhythms which excite the baser human instincts. Jazz causes drunkenness. Reason and reflection are lost and the actions of the persons are directed by the stronger animal passions.

Source 11 – A commentary on the influence of Jazz from the 20s

We'd rather go without clothes than give up our car. I never feel as close to my family as I do when we are together in the car.

Source 12 – The view from an American housewife

Southern trees bear fruit, Blood on the leaves and blood at the root, black bodies swinging in the southern breeze, strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.

Pastoral scene of the gallant south, The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth, Scent of magnolias, sweet and fresh, Then the sudden smell of burning flesh

Here is fruit for the crows to pluck, For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck, For the sun to rot, for the trees to drop, Here is a strange and bitter crop.

Source 13 – "Strange Fruit" by Billie Holiday

"A lad was whipped with branches until his back was ribboned flesh; a black woman was beaten and left to catch pneumonia and die; a white girl, a divorcee, was beaten until she was unconscious; an immigrant was flogged until his back was a pulp because he married an American woman; a black man was whipped until he sold his land to a white woman for a fraction of its value."

Source 14 – Acts of violence carried out by the KKK in the 20s, Alabama

Do nice girls do it? A girl was asked. Well, she said, I don't really want to be kissed by some of the fellows I know but I let them do it anyway, rather than let them think I wouldn't dare.

Source 15 – a 'flapper' interviews in the 20s

The low-cut dresses, the stocking and short skirts are born of the devil and are carrying the present and future generations of this country to destruction.

Source 16 – the President of the University of Florida speaking in 1923

Prohibition is a business. All I do is supply a public demand. I do it in the best and least harmful way I can

Source 17 – Al Capone speaking in the early 30s

Section 1. After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited.

Section 2. The Congress and the several States shall have concurrent power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

Section 3. This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by the legislatures of the several States, as provided in the Constitution, within seven years from the date of the submission hereof to the States by the Congress.

Source 18 – Text from the 18th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America

Mother's in the kitchen

Washing out the jugs

Sister's in the pantry

Bottling the suds

Father's in the cellar

Mixing up the hops

Johnny's on the front porch

Watching for the cops.

Source 19 – popular rhyme from 1925

It is wholly confusing to read the advertisements in the magazines that feature the enticing qualities of vacuum cleaners, mechanical refrigerators and hundreds of other devices which should lighten the chores of women in the home. On the whole these large middle classes do their own housework with few of the mechanical aids... women who live on farms – and they form the largest group in the United States – do a great deal of work besides the labour of caring for their children, washing the clothes, caring for the home and cooking... thousands still labour in the fields... help milk the cows...

The other largest group of American women comprises the families of the labourers... of the miners, the steel workers... the vast army of unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled workers. The wages of these men are on the whole so small [that] wives must do double duty – that is, caring for the children and the home and toil on the outside as wage earners.

Source 20 – Doris E Fleischman, America as Americans See It, 1932

The blaze of revolution is eating its way into the homes of the American workman, licking ay the altars of the churches, leaping into the belfry of the school house, crawling into the sacred corners of American homes, seeking to replace the marriage vows with libertine laws, burning up the foundations of society.

Source 21 – Mitchel Palmer, US Attorney General in 1920

The steamship companies haul them over to America and as soon as they step off the ships the problems of the steamship companies is settled, but our problem has only begun – Bolshevism, red anarchy, black handers and kidnappers, challenging the authority and integrity of our flag. Thousands will come here who will never take the oath to support our constitution and become citizens of the USA. They pay allegiance to some other country while they live upon the substance of our own. They fill places that belong to the wage earning citizens of America... they are of no service whatever to our people... they constitute a menace and a danger to us every day.

Source 22 – A Republican (Helfin) speaking in 1921



Source 23 – A cabaret from the 20s

ENQUIRY: HOW AND WHY DID IT ALL GO WRONG FOR AMERICANS?

- **Reasons for and impact of Wall Street Crash and Depression.**
- **Impact on different sections of society including urban and rural.**

The rich man's chauffer drove with his ears laid back to catch the news of an impending move in Bethlehem Steel; he held 50 shares himself. The window-cleaner at the banker's office paused to watch the ticker, for he was thinking of converting his savings into a few shares of Simmons ... a broker's valet who made nearly a quarter of a million on the market, a trained nurse who cleaned up \$30,000 following the tips given her by grateful patients; and the Wyoming cattleman, 30 miles from the nearest railroad, who bought or sold 1,000 shares a day.

Source 24 – Frederick Lewis Allen, *Only Yesterday* (1931)

The stock market hysteria reached its apex that year [1929]... Everyone was playing the market... on my last day in New York, I went down to the barber. As he removed the sheet he said softly, 'Buy Standard Gas' I've doubled... it's good for another double.' As I walked upstairs, I reflected that if the hysteria had reached the barber level, something must soon happen.

Source 25 – Cecil Roberts, *the Bright Twenties*, 1938

Last summer, in the hot weather, when the smell was sickening and the flies were thick, there were 100 people a day coming to the dumps. A widow, who used to do housework and laundry, but now had no work at all, fed herself and her 14-year-old son on garbage. before she picked up the meat she would always take off her glasses so that she couldn't see the maggots.

Source 26 – *New Republic* magazine (1933)

There is not an unemployed man in the country that hasn't contributed to the wealth of every millionaire in America. The working classes didn't bring this on, it was the big boys...

We've got more wheat, more food, more cotton, more money in the banks, more everything in the world than any other nation that ever lived ever had, yet we are starving to death. We are the first nation in the history of the world to go to the poorhouse in an automobile.

Source 27 – Will Rodgers, *social commentator*, 1931

During the last three months I have visited... some 20 states of this wonderfully rich and beautiful country. A number of Montana citizens told me of the thousands of bushels of wheat left in the fields uncut on account of its low price that hardly paid for the harvesting. In Oregon I saw thousands of bushels of apples rotting in the orchards. At the same time there are millions of children who, on account of the poverty of their parents, will not eat one apple this winter.

I saw men picking for meat scraps in the garbage cans of the cities of New York and Chicago. One man said that he had killed 3000 sheep this fall and thrown them down the canyon because it cost \$1.10 to shop a sheep and he would get less than a dollar for it.

The farmers are being pauperised by the poverty of industrial populations and the industrial populations are being pauperised by the poverty of the farmers. Neither has he money to buy the product of the other; hence we have overproduction and under-consumption at the same time.

Source 28 – the Evidence given to a government committee in 1932 by Oscar Ameringer



77.19 CARTOON: GREAT DEPRESSION, 1932.
t: The Granger Collection, New York

Source 29 – A cartoon from the Depression era

ENQUIRY: HOW EASY WAS IT FOR ROOSEVELT TO WIN THE 1932 ELECTION? / ENQUIRY: WHY WAS THERE OPPOSITION TO THE NEW DEAL?

- Role of government immediately before and after the Wall Street Crash and dissatisfaction such as Bonus Marchers and Hoovervilles.
- Roosevelt's election and reasons for success.
- Immediate response by Roosevelt and New Deal – Hundred Days, who gained and who benefitted.
- Opposition such as republicans, business, Huey Long, Supreme Court.

Never before in this country has a government fallen to so low a place in popular estimation or been so universally an object of cynical contempt. Never before has [a president] given his name so freely to latrines and offal dumps, or had his face banished from the screen to avoid the hoots and jeers of children.

Source 30 – a political commentator, 1932

Farmers are just ready to do anything to get even with the situation. I almost hate to express it, but I honestly believe that if some of them could buy airplanes they would come down here to Washington to blow you fellows up... the farmer is a naturally conservative individual, but you cannot find a conservative farmer today. Any economic system that has in its power to see me and my wife in the streets, at my age what can I see but red?

Source 31 – The Farmers Union of Wisconsin President speaking to a Senate committee in 1932

When I think of what has been happening in this country since unemployment began and when I see the futility of the leaders, I wish we might double the number of Communists in this country, to put the gear, if not of God, then the fear of something else into the hearts of our leaders.

Source 32 – Father J Ryan, a Catholic priest

Millions of our citizens cherish the hope that their old standards of living have not gone forever. Those millions shall not be in vain. I pledge you, I pledge myself, to a New Deal for the American people. This is more than a political campaign; it is a call to arms. Give me your help, not to win votes alone, but to win this crusade to restore America... I am waging a war against Destruction, Delay, Deceit and Despair...

Source 33 – The pre-election speech of Roosevelt, 1932

Two months ago we were facing serious problems. The country was dying by inches. It was dying because trade and commerce had declined to dangerously low levels; prices for basic commodities were such as to destroy the value of the assets of national institutions such as banks, savings banks, insurance companies, and others. These institutions, because of their great needs, were foreclosing mortgages, calling loans, refusing credit. Thus there was actually in process of destruction the property of millions of people who had borrowed money on that property in terms of dollars which had had an entirely different value from the level of March, 1933. That situation in that crisis did not call for any complicated consideration of economic panaceas or fancy plans. We were faced by a condition and not a theory...

First, we are giving opportunity of employment to one-quarter of a million of the unemployed, especially the young men who have dependents, to go into the forestry and flood prevention work. This is a big task because it means feeding, clothing and caring for nearly twice as many men as we have in the regular army itself... We are clearly enhancing the value of our natural resources and second, we are relieving an appreciable amount of actual distress... Second, I have requested the Congress and have secured action upon a proposal to put the great properties owned by our Government at Muscle Shoals to work after long years of wasteful inaction, and with this a broad plan for the improvement of a vast area in the Tennessee Valley. It will add to the comfort and happiness of hundreds of thousands of people and the incident benefits will reach the entire nation.

Next, the Congress is about to pass legislation that will greatly ease the mortgage distress among the farmers and the home owners of the nation, by providing for the easing of the burden of debt now bearing so heavily upon millions of our people.

Source 34 – Extracts taken from FDR's "Fireside chat" 1933

I can assure you that it is safer to keep your money in a reopened bank than under the mattress.

Source 35 – 1st Fireside Chat, (March 1933)

Dear Mr. President: This is just to tell you that everything is all right now. The man you sent found our house all right, and we went down to the bank with him and the mortgage can go on for a while longer. You remember I wrote you about losing the furniture too. Well, your man got it back for us. I never heard of a President like you.

Source 36 – Letter to the President from an old man and his wife, (summer, 1933)

This is the time to speak the truth frankly and boldly... So let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself – nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes efforts to convert retreat into advance... This nation calls for action and action now... Our greatest primary task is to put people to work... we must act and act quickly.

Source 37 – Roosevelt's inauguration speech, 1933

But here is the challenge to our democracy: In this nation I see tens of millions of its citizens - a substantial part of its whole population - who at this very moment are denied the greater part of what the very lowest standards of today call the necessities of life...I see millions denied education, recreation, and the opportunity to better their lot and the lot of their children.

I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished...The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.

Source 38 – 2nd Inaugural Address (1937)

The bank of rescue of 1933 was probably the turning point of the depression. When people were able to survive the shock of having all the banks closed, and then see the banks open up again, with their money protected, there began to be confidence. Good times were coming. It marked the revival of hope.

Source 39 – An advisor of Roosevelt, Raymond Moley, during the Hundred Days Congress session

Wandering around the country with one of New York's baseball teams, I find that [what was]the national road to ruin is now a thriving thoroughfare. It has been redecorated. People have come out of the shell holes. They are working and playing and seem content to let a tribe of professional worriers do their worrying for them.

Source 40 – Rudd Rennie, journalist, speaking in 1934

The New Deal is nothing more or less than an effort to take away from the thrifty what the thrifty and their ancestors have accumulated, or may accumulate, and give it to others who have not earned it and never will earn it, and thus indirectly to destroy the incentive for all future accumulation. Such a purpose is in defiance of all the ideas upon which our civilisation has been founded.

Source 41 – A Republican opponent, 1935

For twelve years this nation was afflicted with hear-nothing, see-nothing, do-nothing government. The nation looked to government but government looked away. Nine crazy years at the stock market and three long years in the bread-lines! Nine made years of mirage and three long years of despair! Powerful influences strive today to restore that kind of government with a doctrine that government is best which is most indifferent... We know now that government by organised money is just as dangerous as government by organised mob. Never before in all our history have these forces been so united against one candidate – me – as they stand today. They are unanimous in their hate of me – and I welcome their hatred.

Source 42 – A speech by Roosevelt during the election campaign of 1936

Whenever this administration has gone to the left I have voted for it, and whenever it has gone to the right I have voted against it...

You are giving a little man a biscuit to eat, and you put a barrel of flour more taxes on top of his head to carry...

The trouble is, Roosevelt hasn't taken all of my ideas; just part of them. I'm about one hundred yards ahead of him. We're on the same road, but I'm here and he's there."

Source 43 – Huey Long, arguing against the New Deal for not going far enough



Source 44 –

A 1934 cartoon by James T. Berryman showing President Franklin D. Roosevelt displaying some interest in adopting the 'Share the Wealth' (i.e. soak the rich) programs of Senator Huey P. Long, costumed here as the Pied Piper.



Source 45 –

A "Hooverville"

**Source 46 –**

Payday for workers of the Columbia River dam, taken in 1933.



Source 47 –

US president Franklin Roosevelt depicted as donor of farm relief under the New Deal.

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