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LESSON 16 Was the New Deal Good or Bad for the Country?

During the 1930's Depression, the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt set up a program called the New Deal to help the country get back on its feet. Below are two viewpoints on whether the New Deal actually helped the country. Read them and answer the questions that follow.

Historian A

The New Deal, hurt our country a great deal. Our economy was in bad shape in 1932, but the New Deal only made matters worse in the long run. The Roosevelt Administration allowed intellectuals and socialists into the government, and these men used their positions to interfere with the normal functioning of the economy. There was too much experimentation—the New Deal confused action with progress.

One of the biggest problems created by the New Deal was an expanding bureaucracy. The federal government got much larger, which led to many of the problems we have today—waste, corruption, inefficiency, and high taxes. Our national debt rose from \$19 billion in 1932 to \$40 billion in 1939. People started thinking that America was a “Handout State” that

could use unlimited spending to cure problems. The giveaway programs are continuing to ruin the moral fiber of America; people do not want to work when they are taken care of by the government.

The New Deal also created class jealousies. Businessmen felt that all kinds of regulations were put on them, while workers and farmers were pampered. They felt private enterprise was being strangled by creeping socialism.

One of the biggest criticisms of the New Deal, however, is that it did not do what it set out to do—it did not get the country out of the Depression. In 1938 the economy was still sick—with a low GNP and high unemployment. It remained for World War II to get us out of the Depression.

Historian B

Franklin Roosevelt provided strong leadership in the 1930s when the country sorely needed it. No one really knows how far his New Deal got us out of the Depression because World War II came along and pulled us back to complete prosperity. We do know that the country was becoming more prosperous by 1936, but then a recession hit and we lost it all. To what extent the recession was a temporary setback in an otherwise general trend toward prosperity is a matter of opinion.

Even if the New Deal did not completely get the country out of the Depression, it must be remembered that its main goal was relief, not recovery. Under it, no one was allowed to starve—everyone kept his self-respect. The New Deal relieved the worst crisis of 1933 and saved the economy from collapse or revolution. Those businessmen who criticize the New Deal owe their livelihood partly to the efforts of Roosevelt.

The New Deal also achieved long-term reform of our economy. It
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Historian B

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changed our country's philosophy to one in which the government has a legitimate role to play in the economy to prevent mass hunger and injustice.

In the process, the New Deal achieved a fairer distribution of national income and purged capitalism of some of its worst abuses.

**Historian A**

1. What is the main point of Historian A?
2. In which sentence(s) (or none) is evidence offered to support Historian A's case?
3. What assumption does Historian A make in the first paragraph, third sentence?
4. In the second paragraph, third sentence, Historian A says, "Our national debt rose from \$19 billion in 1932 to \$40 billion in 1939," to support the argument that the New Deal brought about many problems. Evaluate the reasoning in this argument.

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Q General Questions

9. Which argument is stronger? Why do you think so?

10. Under each cartoon write which viewpoint it would support.



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A. Which viewpoint would it support? Why do you think so?



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B. Which viewpoint would it support? Why do you think so?

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