



# Curriculum Guide

*"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression*

## Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum



Dorothea Lange, September 1939.

## ***"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression***

Thumbnails: FSA Photographs



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## *"This Great Nation Will Endure": Photographs of the Great Depression* **Related Documents**

### **President Roosevelt's 1933 Inaugural Address**

In August 1928, shortly before his election to the presidency, Herbert Hoover had proclaimed, "We in America today are nearer to the final triumph over poverty than ever before in the history of any land." Yet by the end of his term nothing could have been farther from the truth. The Great Depression had reached a pinnacle by the spring of 1933. The banking system was near collapse, a quarter of the labor force was unemployed, and prices and production were down by a third from their 1929 levels.

The nation was looking for new leadership, and it found it in Franklin D. Roosevelt, the two-term Governor of New York. As a candidate for the presidency, Roosevelt had promised, 'a New Deal for the American people.' Upon taking office, he began immediately to make good on his pledge. Roosevelt seemed fully aware of the challenges he and the nation faced and he spoke with confidence and determination. His inaugural address, delivered on the steps of the United States Capitol building on March 4, 1933 gave the weary nation a much needed glimmer of hope.

### **Stryker's Shooting Scripts**

For those born after the 1930s, the Great Depression is something that can be visualized only through photography and film. Certain images have come to define our view of that uncertain time: an anxious migrant mother with her three small children; a farmer and his sons struggling through a dust storm; a family of sharecroppers gathered outside their spartan home. Reproduced repeatedly in books and films, these photographs are icons of an era.

Remarkably, many of these familiar images were created by one small government agency established by Franklin Roosevelt: the Farm Security Administration (FSA). Between 1935 and 1943, FSA photographers produced nearly eighty thousand pictures of life in Depression-era America. This remains the largest documentary photography project of a people ever undertaken. Though the images were collected through the lenses of more than a dozen photographers, they were directed by the vision of one man, Roy Stryker.

Stryker had a keen sense of the types of subjects he wanted captured on film and encouraged his photographers to read about the regions and people they were photographing. He often gave them "shooting scripts" describing assignment themes.

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

March 25, 1933.

This is the original of the Inaugural Address - March 4th, 1933 - and was used by me at the Capitol. Practically the only change, except for an occasional word, was the sentence at the opening, which I added longhand in the Senate Committee Room before the ceremonies began.



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INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF  
PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

MARCH 4, 1933.

*This is a day of consecration.*

I am certain that my fellow Americans expect that on my induction into the Presidency I will address them with a candor and a decision which the present situation of our nation impels. This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So first of all let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself, - nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory. I am convinced that you will again give that support to leadership in these critical days.

In such a spirit on my part and on yours we face our common difficulties. They concern, thank God, only material things. Values have shrunk to fantastic levels; taxes have risen; our ability to pay has fallen; government of all kinds is faced by serious curtailment of income; the

means of exchange are frozen in the currents of trade; the withered leaves of industrial enterprise lie on every side; farmers find no markets for their produce; the savings of many years in thousands of families are gone.

More important, a host of unemployed citizens face the grim problem of existence, and an equally great number toil with little return. Only a foolish optimist can deny the dark realities of the moment.

Yet our distress comes from no failure of substance. We are stricken by no plague of locusts. Compared with the perils which our forefathers conquered because they believed and were not afraid, we have still much to be thankful for. Nature still offers her bounty and human efforts have multiplied it. Plenty is at our doorstep, but a *generous* vast use of it languishes in the very sight of the supply. Primarily, this is because the rulers of the exchange of mankind's goods have failed through their own stubbornness and their own incompetence, have admitted their failure and abdicated. Practices of the unscrupulous money changers stand indicted in the court of public opinion, rejected by the hearts and minds of men.

True, they have tried, but their efforts have been cast in the pattern of an outworn tradition. Faced by failure of credit they have proposed only the lending of more money. Stripped of the lure of

profit by which to induce our people to follow their false leadership they have resorted to exhortations, pleading tearfully for restored confidence. They know only the rules of a generation of self-seekers. They have no vision, and when there is no vision the people perish.

The money changers have fled from their high seats in the temple of our civilization. We may now restore that temple to the ancient truths. The measure of the restoration lies in the extent to which we apply social values more noble than mere monetary profit.

Happiness lies not in the mere possession of money; it lies in the joy of achievement, in the thrill of creative effort. The joy and moral stimulation of work no longer must be forgotten in the mad chase of evanescent profits. These dark days will be worth all they cost us if they teach us that our true destiny is not to be ministered unto but to minister to ourselves and to our fellow-men.

Recognition of the falsity of material wealth as the standard of success goes hand in hand with the abandonment of the false belief that public office and high political position are to be valued only by the standards of pride of place and personal profit; and there must be an end to a conduct in banking and in business which too often has given to a sacred trust the likeness of callous and selfish wrongdoing. Small

wonder that confidence languishes, for it thrives only on honesty, on honor, on the sacredness of obligations, on faithful protection, on unselfish performance: without them it cannot live.

Restoration calls, however, not for changes in ethics alone. This nation asks for action, and action now.

Our greatest primary task is to put people to work. This is no unsolvable problem if we face it wisely and courageously. It can be accomplished in part by direct recruiting by the government itself, treating the task as we would treat the emergency of a war, but at the same time through this employment accomplishing greatly needed projects to stimulate and reorganize the use of our natural resources.

Hand in hand with this we must frankly recognize the overbalance of population in our industrial centers and, by engaging on a national scale in a redistribution, endeavor to provide a better use of the land for those best fitted for the land. The task can be helped by definite efforts to raise the values of agricultural products and with this the power to purchase the output of our cities. It can be helped by preventing realistically the tragedy of the growing loss through foreclosure, of our small homes and our farms. It can be helped by insistence that the federal, state and local governments act forthwith



on the demand that their cost be drastically reduced. It can be helped by the unifying of relief activities which today are often scattered, uneconomical and unequal. It can be helped by national planning for and supervision of all forms of transportation and of communications and other utilities which have a definitely public character. There are many ways in which it can be helped, but it can never be helped merely by talking about it. We must act and act quickly.

Finally, in our progress toward a resumption of work we require two safeguards against a return of the evils of the old order: there must be a strict supervision of all banking and credits and investments; there must be an end to speculation with other people's money, and there must be provision for an adequate but sound currency.

These are the lines of attack. I shall presently urge upon a new Congress in special session detailed measures for their fulfillment, and I shall seek the immediate assistance of the several states.

Through this program of action we address ourselves to putting our own national house in order and making income balance outgo. Our international trade relations though vastly important, are in point of time and necessity secondary to the establishment of a sound national economy. I favor as a practical policy the putting of first things first.

I shall spare no effort to restore world trade by international economic readjustment, but the emergency at home cannot wait on that accomplishment.

The basic thought that guides these specific means of national recovery is not narrowly nationalistic. It is the insistence, as a first consideration, upon the interdependence of the various elements in and parts of the United States -- a recognition of the old and permanently important manifestation of the American spirit of the pioneer. It is the way to recovery. It is the immediate way. It is the strongest assurance that the recovery will endure.

In the field of world policy I would dedicate this nation to the policy of the good neighbor -- the neighbor who resolutely respects himself and because he does so, respects the rights of others -- the neighbor who respects his obligations and respects the sanctity of his agreements in and with a world of neighbors.

If I read the temper of our people correctly we now realize as we have never realized before our interdependence on each other: that we cannot merely take but we must give as well; that if we are to go forward we must move as a trained and loyal army willing to sacrifice for the good of a common discipline, because without such discipline no progress is

made, no leadership becomes effective. We are, I know, ready and willing to submit our lives and property to such discipline because it makes possible a leadership which aims at a larger good. This I propose to offer, pledging that the larger purposes will bind upon us all as a sacred obligation with a unity of duty hitherto evoked only in time of armed strife.

With this pledge taken, I assume unhesitatingly the leadership of this great army of our people dedicated to a disciplined attack upon our common problems.

Action in this image and to this end is feasible under the form of government which we have inherited from our ancestors. Our constitution is so simple and practical that it is possible always to meet extraordinary needs by changes in emphasis and arrangement without loss of essential form. That is why our constitutional system has proved itself the most superbly enduring political mechanism the modern world has produced. It has met every stress of vast expansion of territory, of foreign wars, of bitter internal strife, of world relations.

It is to be hoped that the normal balance of executive and legislative authority may be wholly adequate to meet the unprecedented task before us. But it may be that an unprecedented demand and need

for undelayed action may call for temporary departure from that normal balance of public procedure.

I am prepared under my constitutional duty to recommend the measures that a stricken nation in the midst of a stricken world may require. These measures, or such other measures as the Congress may build out of <sup>its</sup> their experience and wisdom, I shall seek, within my constitutional authority, to bring to speedy adoption.

But in the event that the Congress shall fail to take one of these two courses, and in the event that the national emergency is still critical, I shall not evade the clear course of duty that will then confront me. I shall ask the Congress for the one remaining instrument to meet the crisis -- broad executive power to wage a war against the emergency, as great as the power that would be given to me if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe.

For the trust reposed in me I will return the courage and the devotion that befit the time. I can do no less.

We face the arduous days that lie before us in the warm courage of national unity; with the clear consciousness of seeking old and precious moral values; with the clean satisfaction that comes from the stern

performance of duty by old and young alike. We aim at the assurance of a rounded and permanent national life.

We do not distrust the future of essential democracy. The people of the United States have not failed. In their need they have registered a mandate that they want direct vigorous action. They have asked for discipline and direction under leadership. They have made me the present instrument of their wishes. In the spirit of the gift I take it.

In this dedication of a nation we humbly ask the blessing of God. May he protect each and every one of us. May He guide me in the days to come.

  

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*This is the original reading copy I used March 4<sup>th</sup>*

To all photographers  
Roy E. Stryker

F.S.A.  
1940

SUGGESTIONS FOR PHOTOGRAPHS

If at any time you have a chance, please include a set of pictures on the following:

- A. Meeting-places - official, semi-official, and for general loafing:
  1. Town halls
  2. Court rooms
  3. Court-house steps
  4. Square; common
  5. Village fountain, pump
  6. Street corners
  7. Garages and filling-stations
  8. Blacksmith shops; livery stables (rare)
  9. Pool and billiard halls
  10. Soda counters
  11. Beer halls
  12. Police and fire stations
  13. Clubs and lodges
  14. Churches
  15. All types of war meetings are of especial interest  
(see Small Town script)
  
- B. Salvation Army
  1. Street meetings
  2. Band
  3. Singing
  4. Close-ups - faces and hands
  5. Preaching
  6. Street audience - close shots and pan shots
  7. Shots in hall - meetings in action
  
- C. Pool hall studies
  1. Player
  2. Watchers and loafers
  3. Close-ups

COPY

To all photographers  
Roy E. Stryker

F.S.A.  
1939

General Notes for pictures needed for files

SMALL TOWNS

Stores  
outside views  
front views  
cars and horses and  
buggies (hitching racks)  
inside views  
goods on shelves  
people buying  
people coming out of store  
with purchases  
farm machinery displays

Churches  
on Sunday, if possible

"Court Day"

Children at play (dogs)

Movie

Men loafing under trees

Local baseball games  
players  
spectators

"The Vacant Lot"

Main Street

RURAL

Homes

Barns  
Representative types

Fences  
All types -- rail  
stone

INDUSTRY

Coal  
Mines  
Coal tipple  
R.R. yards with coal cars

Lumbering  
Cut-over land  
Small sawmills  
Lumber

Ghost Towns  
Factories with windows broken

THE HIGHWAY

Pictures which emphasize the fact  
that the American highway is very  
often a more attractive place  
than the places Americans live.

"Restless America"

Beautiful Highways  
Elm, or maple at the curve  
of the road -- contrast with  
rural and industrial slums  
which highways pass through

Lunch Rooms and Filling Station  
Truckers stopped to eat

Trailers on Road

People walking on road

Horse and buggy on road  
Back view -- country road

Signs  
Large signs  
On trees -- barns -- roofs  
Town and village

SPRING

Fitting ground for planting, plowing and harrowing.

Planting.

Trees in bud and in blossom.

New-plowed earth (early morning or late afternoon).

Show "texture." Get the feel of "good earth" into the picture.

Burning weeds and brush.

Cleaning and painting boats.

Gardening.

Clothes airing on the line.

Store windows -- spring clothes, garden equipment.

Seed stores -- "plants and shrubs for sale."

WEATHER

We need more pictures taken to get the feeling of "weather" -- rain, mist and fog, snow, wind.

A few very good cloud pictures will be acceptable.

GENERAL

The country -- show photographically, if possible, the nature of the land:

Hills and mountains

Deep valleys (towns in valleys)

Roads (ahead over hills as seen by driver from car)

Forests and rivers



F. S. A.  
1940

To: All Photographers

From: R. E. S.

Some Suggestions for Pictures on Migrants

**Health**

Sanitary facilities  
Sickness  
Medical attention (or absence of)

**Recreation**

What do the migrants do for amusement?  
What do the youngsters do?

"Help Wanted" signs

Farmer "hunting" help in the towns

Washing clothes

Eating

Cooking

Do the youngsters work in the fields?  
Get ages of those you take if possible

"Air views" of camps (from as high a spot as possible)

Both the raising and harvesting of fruit and vegetable crops in Florida as well as the canning and packing of the produce are accompanied by a large influx of agricultural migratory labor. There are two main reasons for this:

The growing season is comparatively short and intense requiring a large force of workers for a short period. A great expansion in labor needs lasts from only a few weeks in the celery, lettuce, bean and tomato fields to six or seven months in the citrus groves. The time for picking, packing and canning oranges and grapefruit comes at the peak of the winter vegetable season.

Farming in the northern states is at a standstill during the period that workers are needed in Florida. An opportunity to make some money and in addition spend the winter in a more equable climate is an incentive to many. Some of the workers are sharecroppers and tenant farmers from Alabama and Georgia.

Since the work is seasonal and the rate of pay low, the worker cannot remain in one place even if he should so desire. This situation has created a class of "fruit tramps" - men, women and whole families who follow the crops and thereby maintain an annual wage that keeps them in a low standard of living throughout the year. A typical fruit tramp might follow this route:

Belle Glade, Fla. - Dec.  
Deerfield, Homestead, Fla. - Jan., Feb.  
Plant City, Fla. - Feb.  
Starks, Fla. - April  
Mouchatoula, La. - April, May  
Bald Knob, Ark. - May  
Humboldt, Tenn. - May  
Paducah, Ky. - May, June  
Beroda, Riverside, Mich. - June  
Bear Lake, Hart, Shelby, Mich. - July  
Northport, Mich. - Aug.

From this point, he might proceed back to Florida obtaining work in New York apple orchards in the fall. Others cover a wider territory and after leaving Florida sometimes get as far as the Yakima valley of Washington. There are weeks of travel and periods of idleness between growing seasons which the migrant must withstand. Loss of a crop through drought, flood or frost is more than they can provide for. A large percentage of their earnings go for transportation between jobs. Single men and women travel by automobile in groups and live in boarding houses. Families live and travel in homemade trailers or trucks with converted bodies. Most of them express a desire to settle down but in the summer only a minority are able to return to farming, usually on a tenant or sharecrop basis. There are a number of small farm owners, from the middlewest, who come to Florida for a vacation and obtain a job as supervisor or foreman to help pay their expenses. They live in the more expensive tourist and trailer camps and tend to increase competition for the better paid positions.

On the whole, conditions among the citrus workers are better than among the vegetable workers. The Florida citrus groves are in the central portion of the state characterized by a slight ridge or hammock and numerous lakes. The people in this section are better educated and enjoy a higher standard of living than those in the drained swamp lands where vegetables are grown. The proportion of migrants in the citrus groves and packing plants is less than in the vegetable area. At least 50% of the workers in the Winterhaven district were permanent residents. Also, the other half of the workers were fairly certain of getting their seasonal job again.

The wage rate of 20 ¢ an hour is the same for both citrus and vegetable workers. However, the weekly wage for the citrus worker is higher because of a more regular and fuller work-week. The average wage is about \$15.00 a week. Living expenses for a small family amount to \$9.00 a week -- that is, bare subsistence. Unless there is a frost, the citrus worker is sure of six months work which gives him an annual wage of about \$400.00.

Working conditions in the citrus industry are fairly good and grievances are minor. Attempts to organize a labor union, however, are not with aptly by the workers and strong opposition from the employers. The few men who have attempted such organization are effectively kept from obtaining work anywhere. Employer's associations work cooperatively to avoid out-throat competition, to keep the cost of production down and to maintain a fair price for their product. Wage rates are fixed and standard and the constant available supply of cheap labor from nearby states tend to keep them that way.

In the vegetable area, work is very irregular and dependent to a large extent on weather conditions. The crop of beans, celery, lettuce or tomatoes has to be picked at exactly the right time. This type of work is usually done by negroes who crawl on their hands and knees in the black soil which is known as "muck". Many of them, as a result, get an occupational rash or "muck itch". The pickers receive 15¢ a hamper of beans. Although two or three hampers can be filled in an hour, their earnings are not high because so many pickers are used that the job is finished in a hurry. There is a large proportion of migrants among the negroes. The migrant workers usually move in with families who are permanent residents of the negro quarter. This section of town is always full of shiny new automobiles against a background of dance halls, bars and unpainted shacks.

Except for a few negroes who do the heavy lifting and moving, the canning and packing plants employ white workers. Hours of work are dependent upon the amount of produce brought in from the fields. On some days there might be only one hour's work and on others fifteen. This uncertainty extends also to the length of the "season". When periods of idleness become too frequent, migration begins. In all of the plants a belt system maintains a rapid working pace. Sometimes the workers have to stand in water. Child labor is employed, even on night shifts. Under the best conditions, the weekly wage is about \$10.00. It often falls as low as \$2.00.

Living conditions in tourist and trailer camps are characterized by overcrowding and unsanitary conditions. Large families live in one room cabins or small tents. There is neither privacy nor respect for property. Fights are common, sometimes accompanied by stabbings. Well-defined family distinctions which exist in the day time grow rather vague at night. Often a man and woman will live together as "good friends" and when the season is over, leave for different localities. There is probably a high percentage of venereal infection. Conditions are such that some program of education and rehabilitation is obviously necessary.