

# THE ROOSEVELT RAP

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## FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY and MUSEUM

### The Roosevelt Rap

*Lyrics written by Jeffrey Urbin, Education Specialist at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum  
Music recorded by Robert Ferin*

#### **The Roosevelt Rap**

A long time ago,  
In 1882,  
A baby was born,  
Known to me and to you.

His mother called him Franklin,  
His father call him son,  
And he grew up destined,  
For Washington.

Franklin D. Roosevelt,  
a.k.a. FDR,  
Was born along the river,  
In the town of Hyde Park.

He was the only son,  
Of Sara and James,  
Collecting stamps and birds,  
Were his favorite games.

First he went to Groton,  
Then to Harvard too,  
Had degrees in Law and History,  
By the time that he was through.

On March 17th ,  
In 1905,  
Franklin took Eleanor,  
To be his bride.

They had the same last name,  
But that don't mean nothing,  
They were far enough apart,  
They were fifth cousins.

How'd he get started,  
In politics?  
He ran for State Senate,  
From the Dutchess County sticks.

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A Democrat from these parts,  
Was rare to see,  
But FDR made it,  
To Albany.

Then he backed Wilson,  
At the National Convention,  
It was a move that proved,  
To make, a valuable connection.

Wilson soon was President,  
And with that came the gravy,  
He appointed FDR,  
Assistant Secretary of the Navy.

And then in 1920,  
Just for kicks,  
FDR made his return  
to politics.

Number two upon the ticket,  
With a man named Cox,  
But not enough people,  
Marked the Democratic box.

Making it in politics,  
Is tough, you know,  
But not as tough as dealing,  
With polio.

Now Franklin had a homegirl,  
And they called her E.R.  
He sent her off on trips,  
Both near and far.

She was telling everybody,  
That Franklin would be back,  
He wouldn't be stopped,  
By a polio attack.

Everyone around him said,  
"Hey that's great,"  
And they elected him the Governor,  
Of New York State.

That seems pretty easy,  
Now doesn't it?  
But it couldn't have happened,  
without Al Smith.

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Things around the Nation,  
Were going pretty fine,  
That was until October,  
Of 1929.

Hoover seemed insensitive,  
As if he didn't care,  
He said "Relief was round the corner,"  
But the statement didn't square.

Franklin had the common touch,  
He knew how people feel,  
And he spoke at the Convention,  
And he pledged them a "New Deal."

People were beside themselves,  
They knew not what to do,  
That was until November  
of 1932.

They elected Franklin President  
From Prohibition they were parched,  
But he didn't take,  
The reins of power,  
Until early March.

He wasted not a moment,  
To bring us from malaise,  
He passed a slate of legislation,  
In just a hundred days.

He was helping all the people,  
By themselves and then in groups,  
With a recipe of programs,  
Some called alphabet soup.

AAA, CCC and the NLRB,  
NRA, BOB and the FDIC,  
TVA, NRC and the WPA,  
He did it all,  
He went too far, some Republicans would say.

Now you might think,  
that I forgot,  
in the alphabet flurry,  
SSI, but I did not,

Social Se-  
curity was ahead of its time,  
but I almost left it out,  
cause its so hard to rhyme.

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Try it out, and you'll see,  
It's not an easy thing to do,  
If I had been FDR  
It would have been in term two.

G.W. had warned,  
When his term was at an end,  
'avoid entangling alliances,  
if you can'.

The American public,  
took this to heart,  
but FDR knew different,  
He was way too smart.

The appeasement at Munich,  
Well, it worked for a while,  
But give 'em an inch,  
And they'll surely take a mile.

Soon England was clinging,  
But just by its toes.  
So Franklin to the rescue,  
with a garden hose.

Then all of a sudden,  
That war across the sea,  
Was brought to our door,  
In a "Day of Infamy."

It took the Army,  
The Airforce, the Navy and Marines,  
In the factories back home,  
Rosies took to the machines.

We grew gardens, bought war bonds,  
And collected up scrap.  
We fought long and fought hard,  
And we pushed them all back.

Hitler, Hirohito,  
And Mussolini,  
Were the Axis leaders,  
But we had the Big Three.

Roosevelt, Churchill and  
Stalin too,  
Were the Allied leaders,  
Who won,  
WWII.

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I forgot to mention Fala,  
He was the man's best friend.  
In the summer of 1945,  
The war came to an end.

But Franklin didn't see it,  
For on April 12th he died,  
And let's not even mention,  
Who was there at his side.

And so, here has been the story,  
Of FDR's life,  
His vision of United Nations,  
Carried on by his wife.

The two were finally resting,  
In a grave at his home,  
In the garden where the roses,  
From his name are still grown.

### Roosevelt Rap Questions

The following are 54 questions that are raised in the *Roosevelt Rap*. They are designed to be used to test how well the students have been paying attention to the rap. The questions can also be used as jumping off points for class discussions, as topics for homework or term paper assignments, or as prompting questions to accompany the primary source documents that have been provided.

*Use your knowledge about Franklin D. Roosevelt, as well as the information found in the Roosevelt Rap, in order to answer the following questions.*

- 1) When was Franklin D. Roosevelt born?
- 2) Who were FDR's parents?
- 3) What were some of FDR's hobbies?
- 4) Where did FDR go to school?
- 5) When were FDR and Eleanor married?
- 6) Who gave away Eleanor at the wedding? What was his relation to Eleanor?
- 7) What was the first elected position in which FDR served? In what year was he elected?
- 8) Why was it unusual for a Democrat to get elected in Dutchess County?
- 9) Why was FDR's support of Woodrow Wilson's 1912 Presidential campaign so important?
- 10) What were some of FDR's accomplishments and policies while he was serving as Assistant Secretary of the Navy?
- 11) How did FDR's experiences as Assistant Secretary of the Navy prove valuable as he faced preparations for World War II?
- 12) Why did FDR return to politics in 1920?
- 13) What was the result of the 1920 election?
- 14) When did FDR contract polio?
- 15) How did Eleanor Roosevelt keep FDR's name in circulation while he was recuperating from the polio attack?
- 16) Who was Al Smith?
- 17) What role did Al Smith play in FDR's political career?
- 18) When was FDR elected Governor of New York State?
- 19) What is meant by the statement "Hoover seemed insensitive"?
- 20) Who said "[Relief] Recovery is just around the corner"?

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- 21) What were the results of the 1932 election?
- 22) How was FDR able to connect with the common man/woman?
- 23) Why was FDR not able to act as President until March of 1933?
- 24) What were some of the programs FDR passed during his first one-hundred days in office?
- 25) How well have other Presidents performed in their first one-hundred days?
- 26) What was Prohibition? How was FDR associated with the program?
- 27) What is meant by the term “alphabet soup”?
- 28) Explain the New Deal programs mentioned in the rap: AAA, CCC, NRA, NLRB, BOB, FDIC, TVA, NRC and WPA? What did these programs do and were they effective?
- 29) What were the objections Republicans raised to the New Deal programs?
- 30) What was SSI?
- 31) In the rap, “G.W.” advises “avoid entangling alliances.” Who is “G.W.” and what is meant by his statement?
- 32) What was the view of most Americans regarding involvement in the war in the Europe?
- 33) What were FDR’s views regarding the war in Europe?
- 34) What was the Appeasement at Munich?
- 35) How does the saying “give them an inch and they take a mile” relate to the events of World War II?
- 36) What does “England was clinging but just by its toes” mean?
- 37) How was FDR able to save England with a garden hose?
- 38) What is meant by the “day of infamy”?
- 39) Who were the “Rosies”?
- 40) What tasks did they perform?
- 41) Describe some of the activities performed by people on the home front during World War II?
- 42) Who were Hitler, Hirohito and Mussolini?
- 43) Who were the Axis Powers?
- 44) Who were “The Big Three”?
- 45) Who were the Allied Powers?
- 46) When did World War II end in Europe?
- 47) When did World War II end in Asia?
- 48) Who was Fala?
- 49) When did FDR die?
- 50) Who was with FDR when he passed away?
- 51) What was FDR’s vision for the United Nations?
- 52) What did Eleanor Roosevelt do to carry on FDR’s vision for a world organization?
- 53) Where are FDR and Eleanor Roosevelt buried?
- 54) What does the name “Roosevelt” mean?

*\*\*Please contact Jeff Urbin by telephone at (845) 486-7761 or by email at [jeffrey.urbin@nara.gov](mailto:jeffrey.urbin@nara.gov) for answers to the Roosevelt Rap questions.*