Jobs and the Land

New Deal responses to Oklahoma's economic and environmental needs

OKH.C.7.3.B "Describe New Deal programs and projects (e.g., Agricultural Adjustment Act, Tennessee Valley Authority, Works Progress Administration…"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline how each program supplied income or jobs, and circle actions that protected soil or water so you can compare the needs each addressed.

Work, Farms, and Soil in 1930s Oklahoma

1. In the 1930s, an Oklahoma farm family could face two disasters at once. Drought and wind stripped topsoil from fields in the Panhandle, while low crop prices made it hard to pay bills. The New Deal's Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) tried to raise farm prices by paying participating farmers to grow less of certain crops, including cotton and wheat. Fewer acres planted could leave fragile land out of production, but the act was designed mainly to support farm income, not to stop dust storms. Payments often went to landowners, and some tenant farmers lost work or access to land.

2. Young Oklahomans who needed wages could join the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Enrollees lived in camps, earned pay, and worked on public land. In Oklahoma, CCC crews planted trees, built erosion-control structures, and improved state parks. Tree roots helped hold soil in place, while structures such as small dams slowed runoff that could wash soil away. These jobs addressed unemployment and damaged land at the same time. The work did not bring back every lost farm or end the drought, but it left useful improvements. For a worker's family, the pay could also provide food and other necessities during hard years.

3. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) hired unemployed people for public projects, including Oklahoma roads, bridges, and school buildings. A road crew's wages helped families buy necessities, while a safer crossing or a repaired school served the community. Some WPA projects also worked on soil and water conservation, including building small dams and controlling erosion. This approach differed from the AAA's farm payments: the WPA paid people for work, and the CCC paired young workers with conservation jobs. Together, these programs show that a project could meet more than one need, although benefits were uneven and no single program solved Oklahoma's economic and environmental crises.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the AAA address a financial problem for Oklahoma farmers? Why was it not a complete solution for farm families?

2. Describe one CCC project in Oklahoma and explain how it met both an employment need and a conservation need.

3. How could a WPA bridge project meet two needs in an Oklahoma community?

4. How could a WPA conservation project address unemployment and damage to the land at the same time?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine an Oklahoma county in the 1930s with unemployed young adults, bare public land losing soil, and a broken school bridge. In one paragraph, propose two actions modeled on two different programs in the passage, explain who would earn pay, and show how at least one action would protect a natural resource.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.C.7.3.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline how each program supplied income or jobs, and circle actions that protected soil or water so you can compare the needs each addressed. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the AAA address a financial problem for Oklahoma farmers? Why was it not a complete solution for farm families?	**The AAA paid participating farmers to grow less of certain crops to help raise prices. Payments often went to landowners, and some tenant farmers lost work or land access.**
2	Describe one CCC project in Oklahoma and explain how it met both an employment need and a conservation need.	**CCC enrollees earned pay planting trees. The trees' roots helped hold soil in place.**
3	How could a WPA bridge project meet two needs in an Oklahoma community?	**The project paid unemployed workers, and the finished bridge provided a safer crossing.**
4	How could a WPA conservation project address unemployment and damage to the land at the same time?	**The WPA could pay unemployed people to build small dams or control erosion. That work helped protect soil or water.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would organize a CCC crew of unemployed young adults to plant trees on the county's bare public land. The crew would earn pay, and the trees' roots would help hold soil in place. I would also hire unemployed residents through a WPA-style project to repair the school bridge. Their wages would help their families, and the repaired bridge would give the community a safer crossing.

Accept other passage-supported CCC or WPA projects if the response connects two distinct programs to pay or employment and explains how at least one action conserves soil or water.