Relief and Resistance

Oklahoma's needs and responses during the Great Depression

OKH.C.7.3 "Examine the effects of the Great Depression on Oklahomans and evaluate the effectiveness of governmental response. Summarize policies of Governor William H. Murray which impacted the goals of the New Deal in Oklahoma..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two hardships, circle two responses, and give each hardship and a response that addresses it the same number so you can judge how well they fit.

Who Would Recovery Reach?

1. In 1932, a tenant family in western Oklahoma might watch dust sweep across a field that no longer paid the rent. Drought, wind erosion, and falling crop prices pushed many families off farms. Coal miners also faced shrinking demand and lost wages. Local charities could not meet every need. These troubles were not identical: a farmer needed a way to keep soil and income, while an unemployed miner needed wages right away.

2. Federal New Deal programs offered different tools. The Agricultural Adjustment Act paid participating farmers to reduce production, aiming to raise crop prices, but some landlords kept payments while tenant families lost work or land. The Civilian Conservation Corps hired young men to plant trees and build erosion controls. The Works Progress Administration paid jobless people to build Oklahoma roads, schools, and parks. Such jobs brought wages, though they could not restore every lost farm or mining job.

3. Governor William H. Murray ordered some oil wells shut in 1931 to curb overproduction and raise prices, then resisted federal control of relief after the New Deal began. Disputes over who would direct aid complicated cooperation. Coal miners' unions pressed for safer conditions and better pay, while Oklahoma socialists had long argued that workers and small farmers needed more political power. Socialist organizing peaked before the Depression, but its ideas continued to raise questions about who benefited from recovery.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why might an unemployed coal miner need a different response from a tenant farmer facing soil erosion?

2. Which need did the Civilian Conservation Corps address that the Works Progress Administration did not specifically target in the passage?

3. How could Murray's approach help one economic goal but hinder a New Deal goal?

4. How did miners' unions and socialists each challenge who had power during recovery?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five-sentence letter from a 1930s Oklahoma resident to a state lawmaker. Use two details from the passage to propose a change to relief or jobs, explain who would benefit, and address one possible drawback.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.C.7.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two hardships, circle two responses, and give each hardship and a response that addresses it the same number so you can judge how well they fit. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why might an unemployed coal miner need a different response from a tenant farmer facing soil erosion?	**The miner needed wages right away, while the farmer needed income and a way to protect the soil.**
2	Which need did the Civilian Conservation Corps address that the Works Progress Administration did not specifically target in the passage?	**The CCC addressed erosion by hiring young men to plant trees and build erosion controls. The passage describes the WPA building roads, schools, and parks.**
3	How could Murray's approach help one economic goal but hinder a New Deal goal?	**Closing some oil wells could curb overproduction and raise prices. His resistance to federal control of relief complicated cooperation on aid.**
4	How did miners' unions and socialists each challenge who had power during recovery?	**Unions pressed for miners' pay and safety. Socialists argued that workers and small farmers needed more political power.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I am a tenant farmer in western Oklahoma, and falling prices and blowing soil have made rent hard to pay. The Agricultural Adjustment Act can lift prices, but a landlord may keep the payment while a tenant loses work. Please fund paid soil-conservation crews that hire displaced tenants, with state and federal officials sharing oversight. Those wages would help families now, and the work could protect fields later. This plan would cost money and need careful supervision to make sure tenants, not just landowners, get the jobs.

Accept other supported comparisons and proposals. The letter should use two accurate passage details, identify a beneficiary, and acknowledge a plausible drawback.