Power in a Crisis

Read Roosevelt's call for action and weigh competing views of federal power.

USH.C.4.3.A "Assess changing viewpoints regarding the expanding role of government as expressed in President Franklin Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two actions Roosevelt proposed for the federal government, circle one reference to Congress or presidential power, and write 1 and 2 beside two different viewpoints about expanding federal power.

What Should Washington Do?

1 On March 4, 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed a nation shaken by the Great Depression. Banks had failed, jobs had vanished, and many farms earned too little to survive. In his First Inaugural Address, he called fear itself a danger and insisted that the country needed action. Americans did not all agree on what action should look like. Some believed recovery depended mainly on businesses and individuals making their own decisions. Others expected Washington to step in when private efforts could not meet a crisis this large. Roosevelt's speech argued for a more active federal government.

2 Roosevelt offered specific signs of that shift. He proposed putting people to work through direct recruitment by the federal government, especially on projects that would make better use of natural resources. He also called for strict supervision of banking, credit, and investments so that failures and risky practices would not keep destroying savings. These plans assigned national officials jobs that private employers and banks could not handle alone, in his view. To someone worried about unemployment or lost deposits, these proposals could sound protective. To someone wary of federal control, they could sound like too much power in Washington.

3 Roosevelt also described how political power should work during the emergency. He said he would ask Congress for measures to meet the crisis. If Congress did not act, he would request broad executive power to fight the emergency, comparable to the power given to respond to a foreign invasion. That comparison made the stakes vivid, but it raised a question: how much authority should a president hold during a domestic crisis? Roosevelt presented national action as necessary to restore confidence. His listeners could agree that the crisis was severe yet disagree about whether his proposed expansion of federal authority was the right answer.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Roosevelt's plan to recruit workers directly change the role of the federal government compared with leaving hiring to private employers?

2. Why might a person who had lost bank savings welcome Roosevelt's banking proposal while a person wary of federal control opposed it?

3. How could Roosevelt's plan for working with Congress both reassure and worry listeners?

4. Why did the Depression lead some people to favor a larger federal role while others might still resist it? Use evidence from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

In 1933, your town wants Washington to hire unemployed residents to restore a flood-damaged riverbank. Write one paragraph as a town council member: weigh a reason to support this federal role against a reason to worry about it, use two details from the passage, and state your judgment.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.4.3.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two actions Roosevelt proposed for the federal government, circle one reference to Congress or presidential power, and write 1 and 2 beside two different viewpoints about expanding federal power. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Roosevelt's plan to recruit workers directly change the role of the federal government compared with leaving hiring to private employers?	**The federal government would hire people itself for projects involving natural resources instead of relying on private employers to create jobs.**
2	Why might a person who had lost bank savings welcome Roosevelt's banking proposal while a person wary of federal control opposed it?	**Strict federal supervision might help prevent failures and protect savings, but it would also give Washington more control over banks, credit, and investments.**
3	How could Roosevelt's plan for working with Congress both reassure and worry listeners?	**He would ask Congress to act first, which could reassure listeners. His willingness to request broad executive power if Congress did not act could worry those concerned about presidential authority.**
4	Why did the Depression lead some people to favor a larger federal role while others might still resist it? Use evidence from the passage.	**Bank failures and lost jobs led some people to want federal action when private efforts fell short. Others preferred decisions by businesses and individuals or worried about too much power in Washington.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

As a council member, I would support federal hiring to restore the riverbank, but I would ask Congress to oversee the plan. Roosevelt proposed recruiting workers directly through the federal government for projects involving natural resources, so this work fits his approach and would provide wages during the Depression. Still, residents who prefer local decisions could worry that Washington would take control of the project. Roosevelt also said he would ask Congress for action before requesting broad executive power if it failed to act. Congressional approval would address some concerns while allowing urgent work to begin.

Accept different judgments in Part 3 if they weigh both viewpoints and accurately use two passage details. For question 3, distinguish Roosevelt's initial request to Congress from his proposed request for broader executive power if Congress did not act.