

The Legacy of Joseph Kuhn

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Lesson Six: The national bank crisis of 1933 offered unique challenges for Isaac Kuhn and his company. In this lesson students will refer to Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address delivered March 4, 1933 and his March 12, 1933 fireside chat broadcast on radio from the White House.

Duration: This lesson will take two class periods.

Analysis of Local Primary Sources: Students will study a letter written by Isaac Kuhn during the 1933 bank crisis.

Analysis of National Primary Source: Students will read President Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address delivered March 4, 1933 and his fireside chat broadcast on March 12, 1933.

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Franklin_Roosevelt%27s_First_Inaugural_Address
<http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/031233.html>

Background: The stock market crash in the fall of 1929 was followed by a period of instability for banks in the United States. Although Herbert Hoover tried to contain the growing alarm, he was a Republican president with a Democratic congress that did not support the solutions he proposed. By the time Franklin D. Roosevelt was sworn in on March 4, 1933, twenty-one states had closed their banks and alarm had given way to panic.

List of Materials and Attachments:

- President Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address delivered March 4, 1933 and his fireside chat broadcast on March 12, 1933 @:
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Franklin_Roosevelt%27s_First_Inaugural_Address
<http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/031233.html>
- Letter written by Isaac Kuhn on March 9, 1933 found on Box 009 at at the Champaign County Historical Archives, Urbana Free Library, 20 West Green Street, Urbana, Illinois.
- Sound bites from July 19, 2008 interview between Ruth Youngerman Kuhn and Peggy Christensen.

Procedure:

- Read and discuss Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address delivered March 4, 1933. Points to consider:
 - Have students highlight the words "the one thing we have to fear is fear itself" in the first paragraph. What was the American public fearing? Why?

- Roosevelt’s speech blends positives and negatives. Have students read paragraphs two-four then number the difficulties he mentioned in one color and the things he suggested citizens should be thankful for in another.
- In paragraphs four and five, what group did Roosevelt blame for the crisis? Why?
- Have students discuss Roosevelt’s explanation of the path to happiness in paragraph seven. Do they agree? Disagree?
- In paragraph nine Roosevelt calls for two things. What are they?
- Paragraphs 10-13 list Roosevelt’s priorities. Circle them and put brackets around the steps he outlined implement them.
- What did Roosevelt mean by “the putting of first things first” in paragraph 14?
- Read paragraphs 21 and 22 orally then encourage students to compare Roosevelt’s possible request to what happened in the United States following 9/11/01.
- Listen to Ruth Kuhn Youngerman discussing how the depression impacted her family.
- Distribute Isaac Kuhn’s letter dated March 9, 1933 then have students address the questions and activities below.
- Read the first paragraph then discuss the financial status of Jos. Kuhn & Co. as expressed by Isaac Kuhn.
- What action did Franklin Roosevelt take that led Kuhn to say “you know as well as we that no money can be secured from banks at present”? (paragraph 1)
- What did Isaac Kuhn hope that the letter’s recipient would do with checks he’d received? Why? (paragraph 2)
- Have students compare and contrast Kuhn’s call for action in paragraph four with Roosevelt’s comments in paragraph seventeen of his inaugural address.
- Isaac Kuhn identified two practices in paragraphs four and five which he opposed. What were they?
- In paragraph six Kuhn identified a group that was attacking the new administration. Who were they and what did Kuhn accuse them of doing?
- Since there is no name or inside address to indicate the identity of the gentleman to whom Isaac Kuhn wrote this letter, the reader must make an educated guess about his identity. Have students reread the letter looking for clues then discuss the information they found and see if the class can profile the individual.
- Divide the class into groups to address the questions below then distribute Roosevelt’s fireside chat broadcast on March 12, 1933. Group members will become authorities on one aspect of the speech and will share what they learn with their classmates.
 - How did banks work in 1933 (paragraph 2) and what practices led to the banking crisis (paragraphs 3 and 4)?
 - What were the three steps Roosevelt took to address the situation (paragraphs 5 and 6)?
 - What process was outlined for banks in the twelve Federal Reserve Bank cities to reopen? When were other banks scheduled to reopen? (paragraphs 7-10)
 - What activity did Roosevelt identify as being unfashionable and how did he expect the public to respond to his plan? (paragraphs 13 and 14)
 - Who did Roosevelt blame for the bank crisis? What did they do? (paragraph 17)
 - How do you think Isaac Kuhn reacted to this fireside chat. Pull quotations from his letter to support your opinion.