

Surviving the Depression in Champaign-Urbana

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Lesson #4: The New Deal in Champaign-Urbana

Abstract: In this lesson, students will investigate primary sources related to the impact of the Works Progress Administration in Champaign-Urbana. While there were several New Deal programs that impacted Champaign-Urbana, the WPA resulted in the most extensive change and left a legacy that can still be seen today. Students will analyze photographs of WPA projects from the 1930s to determine the extent to which the WPA changed life in the community.

Essential Questions:

- How did the WPA impact life in Champaign-Urbana?
- How did WPA projects in Champaign-Urbana attempt to deal with the problems of the Depression?

Assessment: Students will be assessed based on their ability to analyze the photographs of WPA projects in Champaign-Urbana. Students will also be assessed on their ability to work collaboratively to determine and propose similar projects that could be completed in the community today as part of the recovery from the current economic recession. Finally, students will be assessed on their ability to use the sources in this lesson in their essay at the end of the unit.

Procedures:

- 1) *Setting the Purpose:* The teacher should begin this lesson by reviewing with students the purpose of the New Deal and the goals of the WPA. The teacher can introduce students to the role of the WPA in Champaign-Urbana by having students read the December 28, 1935, *Urbana Courier* article: “1,471 at Work on County WPA Jobs Saturday.” This article highlights several different WPA projects that were being completed in the community in 1935.
- 2) After reviewing the purpose of the New Deal and the WPA, divide the class into eight groups. Each group should receive a photograph analysis sheet that students will use to analyze the WPA photographs (**Source #9**). Hand one of the photographs out to each of the groups. The groups should use the photograph analysis sheet to discuss amongst themselves what they see in the photographs. Students should document this source on their source charts for the essay at the end of the unit.
- 3) At the conclusion of this lesson, students will have analyzed all of the primary sources that they will use to write the paper for this unit. The teacher should hand out the essay assignment to the students. The teacher may want to use a graphic organizer to help students organize their thoughts before writing.

Analysis of Local Primary Sources: During this lesson, students will analyze photographs of local WPA projects from the *Urbana Courier*. In addition, students may read an article from the *Courier* about projects that employed Champaign-Urbana citizens.

Ties to National Primary Sources: During this lesson, students may analyze photographs of well-known WPA projects in order to understand the purpose of the WPA in communities.

List of Materials and Resources:

“1,471 at Work on County WPA Jobs Saturday,” *Urbana Courier*, December 28, 1935

Eight local WPA Photographs from the *Urbana Courier*

Photograph Analysis Sheet

Essay Assignment