

# FDR Speech

## Primary Source Reading

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. Booming economies are often based on some level of speculation, which is really just another word for betting. For example, in the 1830s, speculators in the Midwest bet that if they bought land, the prices would eventually increase, so they could make a profit if they sold it. Sometimes speculation works out, and sometimes it doesn't. If one person's speculative investment doesn't make money, it only matters to them. But when lots of speculative investments don't come to fruition, it often results in a crash.

Notes

In the 1920s, Americans were engaging in a lot of stock speculation. They bought stocks hoping to make a lot of money, which meant they were at risk for losing a lot of it. Because so many people were investing in the market, stock prices increased and exceeded their actual value. At the same time, manufacturing and production were going down and unemployment was rising. In the fall of 1929, investors began to panic and sell their stocks. For these reasons, on October 29, 1929, the market crashed. That day would come to be known as "Black Tuesday," the beginning of the Great Depression.

2. Within weeks of Black Tuesday, the stock market lost \$30 billion. The Great Depression became the worst economic depression in history. In America, 30,000 businesses failed in 1932 alone. In 1933, the unemployment rate was 25 percent. People left their homes and families in search of work opportunities that didn't exist. Herbert Hoover, the president at the time, did little more than tell Americans "everything is going to be just fine...any day now." He was wrong.

Notes

In the 1932 election, Hoover was defeated by Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR), who would go on to become the longest-sitting president in US history.

3. FDR went to work quickly. In his famous first hundred days, he launched the New Deal, his plan for America's recovery. Roosevelt and Congress passed so many acts that he didn't even have time to read them all (though he did sign them). His approach seemed to be to try as many things as possible to fix the depression. A conservative Supreme Court declared many of these acts unconstitutional, but Roosevelt and Congress kept passing them anyway.

Notes

Two years later, Roosevelt redoubled his efforts with the Second New Deal, the centerpiece of which was the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The WPA eventually pumped \$11 billion into the economy and helped pull the nation out of its economic slump. FDR also created Social Security, a tax that contributes to a guaranteed income for people who are retired or unemployed.

4. Roosevelt was a charismatic leader. Under Hoover, 25,000 disgruntled and impoverished World War I veterans had marched to Washington to demand their war bonus. Seeing that these ragged men were disrupting the capital city, Hoover sent out the military—tanks and all—to squash the protest.

Notes

When this "Bonus Army" returned under Roosevelt's administration, the president sent out his wife, Eleanor, to meet with them and serve them tea. Roosevelt also invented "fireside chats," which were radio broadcasts that rallied popular support for his policies and gave hope to a hurting nation.