

TEACHER GUIDE

1936 DOC. #2: "Makers of History" Cartoon

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The day after Franklin Roosevelt made his famous announcement at the 1932 Democratic National Convention "I pledge you, I pledge myself, to a new deal for the American people," the popular cartoonist Rollin Kirby used the phrase "new deal" in one of his cartoons. Before long newspapers all over the country were calling Roosevelt's plan the New Deal.

At first President Roosevelt's programs attempted to bring about reform with bills such as the National Recovery Act and the Agricultural Adjustment Act. When those programs were declared unconstitutional by the courts, Roosevelt worked tirelessly to pass a new set of programs that are now referred to as the Second New Deal. Many of these bills were passed during the term of the 74th Congress in 1935 and 1936.

Programs passed during the Second New Deal concentrated on providing reform and relief to workers. These included the Social Security Act, providing unemployment insurance and pensions to workers; the Wagner Act, guaranteeing workers the right to bargain collectively and to negotiate with their employers; and the Works Progress Administration (or WPA), a large-scale national works program which put the unemployed to work building roads, bridges, and airports.

> Project the document.

This cartoon, "Makers of History," by Rollin Kirby notes the completion of legislation by the 74th Congress. The figure on the left represents the Congress. The cards in his back pocket are railroad tickets for his trip home from Washington at the closing of the current session. The figure on the right is President Roosevelt.

QUESTION	What are the messages the cartoonist is conveying about Roosevelt? Give evidence to show how you came to this conclusion.
SUGGESTED ANSWER	He is a strong and capable leader, responsible for getting his ideas passed by Congress.
EVIDENCE	Roosevelt is relaxed and in control; he is shaking the hands of Congress while placing his other hand on a stack of papers marked "Administration Bills passed"

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"Makers of History" Cartoon

PowerPoint Slide

QUESTION **Is this a positive, message-based cartoon or a negative, attack-based cartoon? Justify your answer with evidence.**

SUGGESTED ANSWER This cartoon is positive and message-based.

EVIDENCE The title, "Makers of History"; Roosevelt and Congress are shaking hands, a sign of collegiality and cooperation; the cartoon affirms what is good rather than criticizing what is bad

QUESTION **What is the cartoonist's perspective on the Second New Deal? How can you tell?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER The cartoonist is in favor of the New Deal.

EVIDENCE both Roosevelt and the Congress are smiling; the portrait in the background evokes the founding fathers (other "makers of history"); the Bills are large and impressive-looking

FURTHER QUESTIONS

How did the introduction of Social Security during Roosevelt's second term affect senior citizens?

What effect does the Social Security program have today on younger versus older voters?

ADDITIONAL INFO

Rollin Kirby won three Pulitzer prizes for his cartoons. His cartoon character, "Mr. Dry," was credited by some for speeding up the end of Prohibition by poking fun at the temperance movement. Kirby also gained fame for his anti-fascist cartoons lampooning Adolf Hitler and the American fascist priest, Father Coughlin.

CONNECTIONS

(see thematic listing)

Cartoons