

Out of the Darkness

The Tennessee Valley Authority and the Great Depression



Introduction

The purpose of these lessons is to introduce students to the role that the creation of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) played in the economic development of the South during the Depression. The length of these lessons can be adjusted to meet your time constraints. Student access to a computer lab with Internet connectivity is recommended but not required. Another option is for the teacher to conduct the lessons in a classroom with one computer with Internet connectivity and an LCD projector.

Tennessee Curriculum Standards

These lessons help fulfill the following Tennessee Teaching Standards for:

The 1920s

- **US.32** Describe the rise of mass production techniques and the impact of new technologies, including the advent of airplane travel, spread of electricity, popularity of labor saving appliances and innovations in food processing and food purchasing (Clarence Saunders). (E, G, H, TN)

The Great Depression

- **US.47** Write a narrative piece that includes multiple media components to describe the toll of the Great Depression on the American people, including massive unemployment, migration, and Hoovervilles. (C, E, H, G)
- **US.49** Identify and explain the following New Deal programs and assess their past or present impact: (E, H, P, TN): Tennessee Valley Authority
- **US.51** Citing evidence from maps, photographs and primary source documents, analyze the development of TVA on Tennessee's rural geography, economy, and culture, and debate the issues of the Norris Dam and Dale Hollow Lake controversies. (C, E, G, P, TN)

Federal Government and the Economy

- **GC.49** Explain how the role of government in a mixed economy includes providing for national defense, addressing environmental concerns, defining and enforcing property rights, attempting to make markets more competitive and protecting consumer rights. (E, P)
- **GC.51** Describe how the government responds to perceived social needs by providing public goods and services. (E, P)

Tennessee State and Local Government

- **GC.64** Working with other students, identify a significant public policy issue in your community, gather information about that issue, fairly evaluate the various points of view of competing interests, examine ways of participating in the decision making process about the issue, and write a position paper or make a presentation on how the issue should be resolved. (C, P, TN)

Inquiry Skills

- **CI.1** Analyze the use of persuasion, argument and dispute when discussing current issues.
- **CI.6** Identify and research, formulate a hypothesis and propose solutions for a selected current event problem in an argumentative essay.

The Impact of Individuals, Groups and Organizations on Contemporary Events

- **CI.11** Identify and explain current crucial issues and the relevant groups and individuals involved in these issues in the United States and globally, including the creation of a media presentation that integrates multiple sources of information on one such issue. (C, E, G, H, P)

The Role of Government

- **E.33** Explain how government responds to perceived social needs by providing public goods and services. (E, P)

Primary Documents and Supporting Texts

- Franklin Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address
- Political cartoons about The New Deal

Objectives

- Students will identify New Deal Programs/Initiatives (TVA).
- Students will analyze how World War II affected the American economy.
- Students will recognize the effects of the New Deal and World War II on the Tennessee Valley.
- Students will explore how World War II had an impact on everyday American life.
- Students will assess the lasting impact of the New Deal policies.

TENNESSEE SOCIAL STUDIES LESSON #1

Out of the Darkness

Mini lessons that meet Tennessee Curriculum Standards that can be taught using Currents of Change online resources.

If you want to teach this....

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Try this...

Show "The Tennessee Valley before TVA" on DVD or online at www.currentsofchange.net

Recall from video: *Who created TVA? In what year was TVA created?*

Think-Pair-Share: *Have students think about the following question for a moment, then pair with a peer and share their response.*

Discuss as a class: *Why was the creation of TVA and the building of dams such an effective solution for the Tennessee Valley during the Great Depression?*

Extension Activity: *Have students write a written response to the following questions: Do you think TVA was the right solution for the Tennessee Valley? Was there anything that would have made it better?*

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The Impact of Individuals, Groups and Organizations on Contemporary Events

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Try this...

Using the Eminent Domain Resource from the Currents of Change website, discuss the definition of eminent domain and its applicability in the Tennessee Valley Authority Act of 1933.

Have students decide whether they agree, disagree, strongly agree or strongly disagree with eminent domain and its use in TN and why they feel that way.

In the class, have the following four choices posted in different areas of the room: Agree, Disagree, Strongly Agree and Strongly Disagree. Students go to the area that matches their choice and share with the others why they chose that option.

A group leader from each group explains their choice and once all groups have gone, the floor can be open for debate of the choices (students are able, at this point to, move to a different option if they change their mind).

Watch Norris Dam abbreviated video clip. Give students the opportunity to change their minds again.

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Try this...

Compare and Contrast the before and after TVA photos found online:

Using the photo resource online, have students compare and contrast before and after pictures as a class. Individually, students then write how the pictures demonstrate the impact of TVA on the Tennessee Valley.

Introductory Activity

1. Using a TV and DVD player (or) computer with DVD player and an LCD projector, show the 26-minute video *Built for the People – The Story of the TVA* (available on the DVD or currentsofchange.net).
2. Use the following questions to lead the class in a follow-up discussion:
 - a. TVA was signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and is said to have “taken the South ‘out of the darkness.’” What does this mean? How did TVA take the South out of the darkness?
 - b. Would life today be different without the creation of TVA? How? In what ways has TVA changed life in the Tennessee Valley?
 - c. Do you think the traditions and sacrifices of past generations are reflected in TVA’s work today?



Discovery Activity

Exploring the CurrentsOfChange.net Website

Note: This class can be conducted in a student computer lab with Internet connectivity where each student has access to his or her own computer. Another option would be for the teacher to lead the class through the exercise using the website and handouts in a classroom using a single computer with Internet connectivity and an LCD projector.

1. Distribute a handout to each student. Students will write answers on notebook paper (see back for handout).
2. Direct students to the website: currentsofchange.net.
3. Ask students to use the tools and resources provided by the website to respond to the handout questions (for a 100-point grade).
4. As the students complete the activity, be available to answer any questions they might have.

Extension Activities

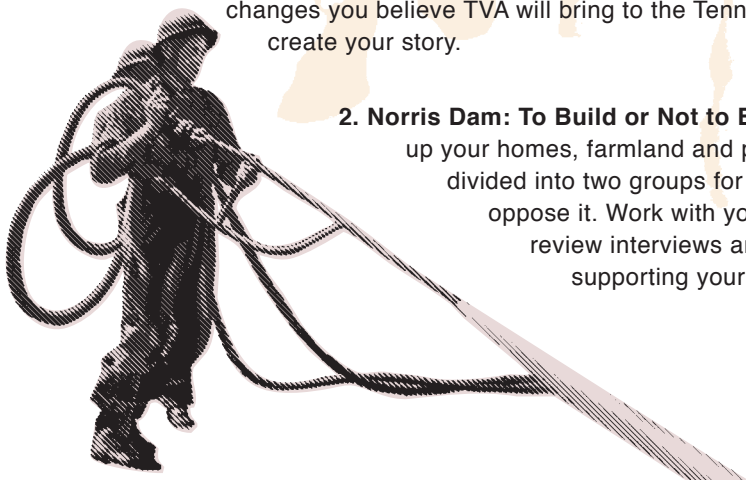
Digging Deeper

Assign students one of the extension activities for this lesson, or provide a list of all Extension Activities (provided on currentsofchange.net/teachers) and let students work in groups to decide which extension activity they would like to complete.

Answers to the Extension Activities will vary based on student interest and the amount of research they conduct. This is different from the Student Handout answers, which are very specific and are included in this folder.

Background information for the Extension Activities has been included on our website, currentsofchange.net/teachers.

1. **TVA – The Beginning.** Pretend you are a news reporter assigned to cover the announcement of the creation of the Tennessee Valley Authority. Go to the website to watch the video of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s historic speech launching the TVA and to read an excerpt from the speech. Write a short article announcing that the TVA Act has been signed into law. In your article, use information from the documentary and Roosevelt’s speech to highlight at least three changes you believe TVA will bring to the Tennessee Valley. Use the website template and photo archive to create your story.
2. **Norris Dam: To Build or Not to Build?** Imagine you and your classmates have been asked to give up your homes, farmland and property so that TVA can build Norris Dam. Your class will be divided into two groups for a debate. One group will support Norris Dam, and the other will oppose it. Work with your group to prepare for the debate by visiting the website to review interviews and footage about Norris Dam, then create a list of arguments supporting your position.





3. Tennessee Valley Stories. The interviews and stories in the film demonstrate the personal impact of the TVA on the lives of the people of the Tennessee Valley. Choose an older friend or family member to interview about their experience growing up in the Tennessee Valley and the impact of TVA. To prepare for the interview, visit the website to review the personal stories and excerpts from the film, then create your own set of questions. You may write out the interview or film it.

Option: Instead of interviewing a friend or family member, select a person featured in one of the photographs on the website. Write what you imagine their story to be: Who are they? Where do they live? How did their life change as a result of the TVA?

4. The Norris Dam Bill. Nebraska Senator George Norris was instrumental in passing this bill, which permitted the building of Norris Dam. Watch the video reenactment of Senator Norris's speech, which you'll find on the website, to discover reasons why he supported the building of the dam. Then pretend to be Senator Norris and write a speech arguing for the passing of the bill in the Senate. Be prepared to give the speech to your class.

5. The Greater Good? Eminent domain is a law that allows the government to purchase privately owned land from landowners in order to meet a public need. Your class will be divided into two groups for a debate. One group will support eminent domain, and one group will oppose it. Prepare for the debate by reviewing the "Eminent Domain" page on the website and by watching the videos called, *Tellico Dam Controversy (Snail Darter)* and *Norris Dam (Extended Version)*, then generate a list of specific examples from the video *Built for the People—The Story of the TVA*, to help support your position.

6. Electricity's Impact. Watch the video interviews with Leo Cobb on the website, then think about what electricity has meant to Leo and his family. Now choose a photograph, object or artifact that best represents the significance of electricity and its effect on society and the Great Depression. Create a short presentation about the image or artifact to share with your class.



OUT OF THE DARKNESS

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Name _____ Date _____ Class _____

Directions: Use the information, tools and resources provided online at currentsofchange.net to answer the following questions. Use complete sentences to respond to the short-answer questions.

1. Which President authorized the creation of TVA? If you had been president, would you have authorized the creation of TVA? Why or why not?
2. What year did the President sign the legislation creating TVA?
a) 1909 b) 1929 c) 1933 d) 1945
3. What was the name of the first dam TVA built?
a) Norris Dam b) Wilson Dam c) Douglas Dam
4. Before dams were constructed, large natural disasters would hit the Tennessee Valley each year that would destroy homes and farmland. What were these natural disasters, and how did the dams help?
5. Why did one Tennessee Valley resident once say, "I never even knew when the Depression had come"?
a) They did not have a TV to watch the event
b) Newspapers did not report it
c) They were already too poor to notice the change
d) The Depression was an easy time
6. What name did some Southerners give electricity when it was first introduced?
7. Approximately how many people were moved from their land so that TVA could construct Norris Dam?
8. During the building of the Norris Dam, approximately how many graves did TVA relocate?
a) 100 b) 500 c) 1,000 d) 5,000
9. Imagine you are living in the early 1930s. President Roosevelt has just signed a bill into law creating the Tennessee Valley Authority. You know TVA will bring many changes to your area, but it will also bring economic help. Do you support or oppose these changes? Does this scenario relate to anything happening in our current economy? Use specific examples from the film to back up your response.
10. Look at the chart on currentsofchange.net, which shows the USA GDP (Gross Domestic Product) from 1910-1960. What trend do you see occurring from 1929-1939? Why do you think we see this trend?
11. Look at the chart on currentsofchange.net, which shows the unemployment rate in the U.S. from 1910-1960. What trend do you see occurring from 1929-1939? What events contributed to these changes in the unemployment rate?