

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

A P R E S I D E N T ' S V I S I O N

PRIMARY SOURCE WORKSHEET

LETTER TO PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT BY N. S., DECEMBER 11, 1934, AND LETTER TO ELEANOR ROOSEVELT BY MRS. J. G., AUGUST 28, 1934.

From *Down and Out in the Great Depression: Letters from the Forgotten Man*, ed Robert S. McElvaine. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983.

Sulpher Springs, Texas
December 11, 1934

President Roosevelt,
Washington, D.C.

Dear President:

I am in debt needing help the worst in the world. I own my own little home and a few live stock. Nine (9) head of read white face cattle and a span of mules. I have them all mortgaged to a man and he is fixing to foreclose me.

I have done all I could to pay the note and have failed on everything I've tried. I fell short on my crop this time and he didn't allow me even one nickel out of it to feed myself while I was gathering it and now winter is here and I have a wife and three (3) little children, haven't got clothes enough to hardly keep them from freezing. My house got burned up three years ago and I'm living in just a hole of a house and we are in a suffering condition. My little children talking about Santa Claus and I hate to see Xmas come this time because I know it will be one of the dullest Xmas they ever witnessed.

I have tried to compromise with the man that I am in debt to and he wont except nothing but the money or my stock and I can't borrow the money and I need my stock so I am asking you for help of some kind please.

So I remain,
Your humble servant
N. S. [male]
Sulpher Springs, Texas

Montvale, N.J.
Aug 28, 1934

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt,

Thank you very much for helping me to keep my house. If it wasn't for you I know I would have lost it. I hope and pray that Mr. Roosevelt will keep his position a long time. You have saved my life. I would have killed myself if I would have lost my house. I will never forget you and will always pray for you and your family. I went to the Home Loan and they say everything would be allright. Forgive me if I caused you any trouble, I remain.

yours truly

Mrs. J. G.

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QUESTIONS

Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. What personal crisis does the author of the first letter face?
2. What does his letter suggest about the financial status of his bank?
3. What does his situation suggest about Roosevelt's decision to prioritize the nation's banks when he entered office?
4. What does this letter suggest about the way some Americans viewed Roosevelt during this time of financial crisis?
5. Roosevelt received many letters like the one from N. S. Regardless of what you know about Roosevelt, how do you think he should have responded? How should the government respond to this citizen? Justify your response.
6. How did the New Deal help the author of the second letter?
7. What evidence can you find in the letter to suggest that the author received a personal response from the White House about her financial crisis?
8. What do you know about First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt? What role does this letter suggest she played in her husband's administration?
9. List three things the letters tell you about life in the United States at the time they were written.

ACTIVITIES

Use your textbook and other print and online resources to complete the following activities.

1. Reply to the first letter as if you worked for President Roosevelt's White House staff.
2. Eleanor Roosevelt broke from tradition as First Lady by playing an active role in politics and policymaking. List several ways she reached out to Americans in need during the Great Depression. How did she help President Roosevelt create and advertise his vision for the nation? Consult the Humanities Texas Digital Repository for additional resources.
3. Eleanor Roosevelt published her newspaper column "My Day" six days a week from 1935 to 1962. Her articles are available online at <http://www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/myday/>. Read at least ten of the articles from the late 1930s. Then write a paragraph describing how Eleanor Roosevelt appeared to her readers. Does she seem likable? Do you think readers responded positively or negatively to her articles? Explain your answers.

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