

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

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

PRIMARY SOURCE WORKSHEET

EXCERPT FROM THEODORE ROOSEVELT, "THE SQUARE DEAL," DELIVERED ON SEPTEMBER 7, 1903, TO THE NEW YORK STATE AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION IN SYRACUSE, NY.

We can keep our government on a sane and healthy basis, we can make and keep our social system what it should be, only on condition of judging each man, not as a member of a class, but on his worth as a man. It is an infamous thing in our American life, and fundamentally treacherous to our institutions, to apply to any man any test save that of his personal worth, or to draw between two sets of men any distinction save the distinction of conduct, the distinction that marks off those who do well and wisely from those who do ill and foolishly. There are good citizens and bad citizens in every class as in every locality, and the attitude of decent people toward great public and social questions should be determined, not by the accidental questions of employment or locality, but by those deep-set principles which represent the innermost souls of men.

The failure in public and in private life thus to treat each man on his own merits, the recognition of this government as being either for the poor as such or for the rich as such, would prove fatal to our Republic, as such failure and such recognition have always proved fatal in the past to other republics. A healthy republican government must rest upon individuals, not upon classes or sections. As soon as it becomes government by a class or by a section, it departs from the old American ideal. . . .

We must act upon the motto of all for each and each for all. There must be ever present in our minds the fundamental truth that in a republic such as ours the only safety is to stand neither for nor against any man because he is rich or because he is poor, because he is engaged in one occupation or another, because he works with his brains or because he works with his hands. We must treat each man on his worth and merits as a man. We must see that each is given a square deal, because he is entitled to no more and should receive no less.

Finally, we must keep ever in mind that a republic such as ours can exist only by virtue of the orderly liberty which comes through the equal domination of the law over all men alike, and through its administration in such resolute and fearless fashion as shall teach all that no man is above it and no man below it.

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QUESTIONS

Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. According to Roosevelt, how should we judge individuals?
2. In the second paragraph of the excerpt, Roosevelt describes the United States government as a “republican government.” What does he mean by the term “republican”?
3. According to Roosevelt, why must a “healthy republican government . . . rest upon individuals”?
4. What does Roosevelt mean when he declares that Americans “must see that each is given a square deal”? What does he mean by “square deal”?

ACTIVITIES

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

1. Using your textbook or the images in the online gallery, identify an image of Roosevelt that could be used as an illustration for this speech. Explain why you chose this image.
2. Using the poster and your textbook, identify five challenges the United States faced during Roosevelt’s presidency. Choose one of these challenges, and explain why Americans in 1903 might have assumed that Roosevelt addressed it in this speech.
3. Discuss the following issue as a class: “The interests of a region of the country should never take priority over the interests of the nation as a whole.” Be sure to provide arguments for both sides of the issue.
4. Think of a few issues that are particularly important to your community, state, or region today. If those issues were made a national priority, would other parts of the country be hurt in any way? Provide examples.

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