

“Creative Conservation:” The Environmental Legacy of Pres. Lyndon B. Johnson 1963-1969

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President Johnson and the Texas Hill Country

Overview Providing Context for Educators

Lyndon Johnson deeply loved the Texas Hill Country where he grew up. His experiences in this often-harsh setting shaped his personality and values. He grew up poor leading to a unique empathy for his fellow rural Texans. The land and its inability to sustain his family, and others like the Johnson's, left a profound effect on his life. The barrenness and beauty combined molded Johnson in way that compelled him to help his fellow Texans and Hill Country natives whenever and wherever possible. President Johnson accomplished a great deal throughout his life for his home state; and many of these accomplishments created lasting benefits for all Texans.

Through knowledge of the physical environment of the land on which President Johnson was raised, students begin to understand and relate to how the power of place formed President Johnson in a great many ways. LBJ's emotional connection to the place where he was raised fostered a determination to help not only his direct neighbors, but all Texas residents gain access to amenities many of us take for granted, such as electricity.

Today's Hill Country is vastly different than in LBJ's time - greater population, higher land prices relative to the Great Depression, a more varied economy - overall it is more prosperous. Without a doubt, many Texans believe the Hill Country is one of the state's greatest assets. Much of this is due to the work of Lyndon Johnson.

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Activity: Developing a Sense of Place and LBJ’s Texas

Elementary teachers can incorporate the Activity in this section into lessons covering geography, history, or economics.

Discussion: Place Shapes Identity

1. Define the “power of place” and discuss what it means to have a “sense of place.” Ask students to think of places that are meaningful to them. How do the experiences in those places contribute to how they view themselves. Ask students how their favorite places change over time. This abstract understanding of geography creates awareness between people and their environment, it serves as a form of human geography.
2. A hands on activity to solidify the meaning of place is to have students draw a map of their school. Take them on a senses scavenger hunt where they document the senses experienced in different places around school. Then have them write about their favorite places in the building or outside. Ask a big picture question pertaining to the greater community. What other places would the students like to explore or learn about.

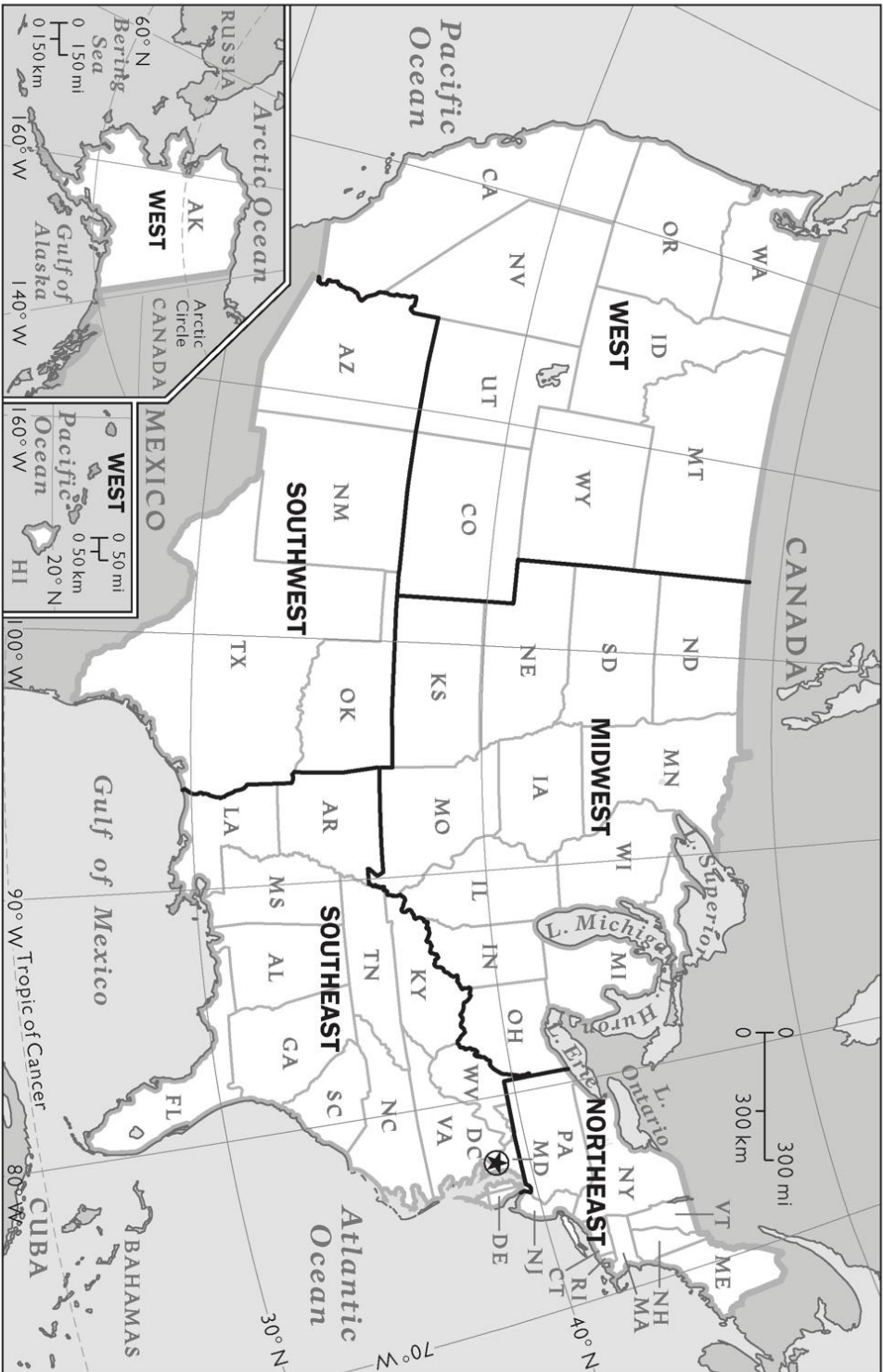
Resources:

For more information about fostering a sense of place or Activity visit:

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/jul2015/sense-of-place-human-geography>

3. After discussing place, students can connect how they relate to the physical, economic, and political structures of their place, comparing that to LBJ’s experience while growing up in the Hill Country.
4. Explain how the United States, Texas, and local communities are comprised of economic regions often determined by physical properties such as rivers, available vegetation, and mountain ranges in addition to local culture.
5. Ask students to find Texas on the map of the region map United States, on page 7 of this guide. Then, using the Texas region map, on page 8, ask students to identify where they live and where LBJ lived in Johnson City, Texas. Using the Texas economic regions map, on page 9, ask students to note the economic industries of where they live then compare that to the economic industries in the Hill Country, where LBJ lived. What other regions in the United States have similar economic industries? Use the map on page 10. Why do people settle in these particular regions and how did they get there?
6. Explain the difference between urban, rural, and suburban areas. What is their hometown considered? What about LBJ’s home town of Johnson City, Texas?

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NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC

education

UNITED STATES
REGIONS

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TEXAS



Capital: **Austin**

Area: **268,601 sq. miles (2nd)**

Population: **28,700,000 (2nd)**

Date of Union Entry: **12/19/1845 (28th state)**

State Bird: **Mockingbird**

State Flower: **Bluebonnet**

State Tree: **Pecan**

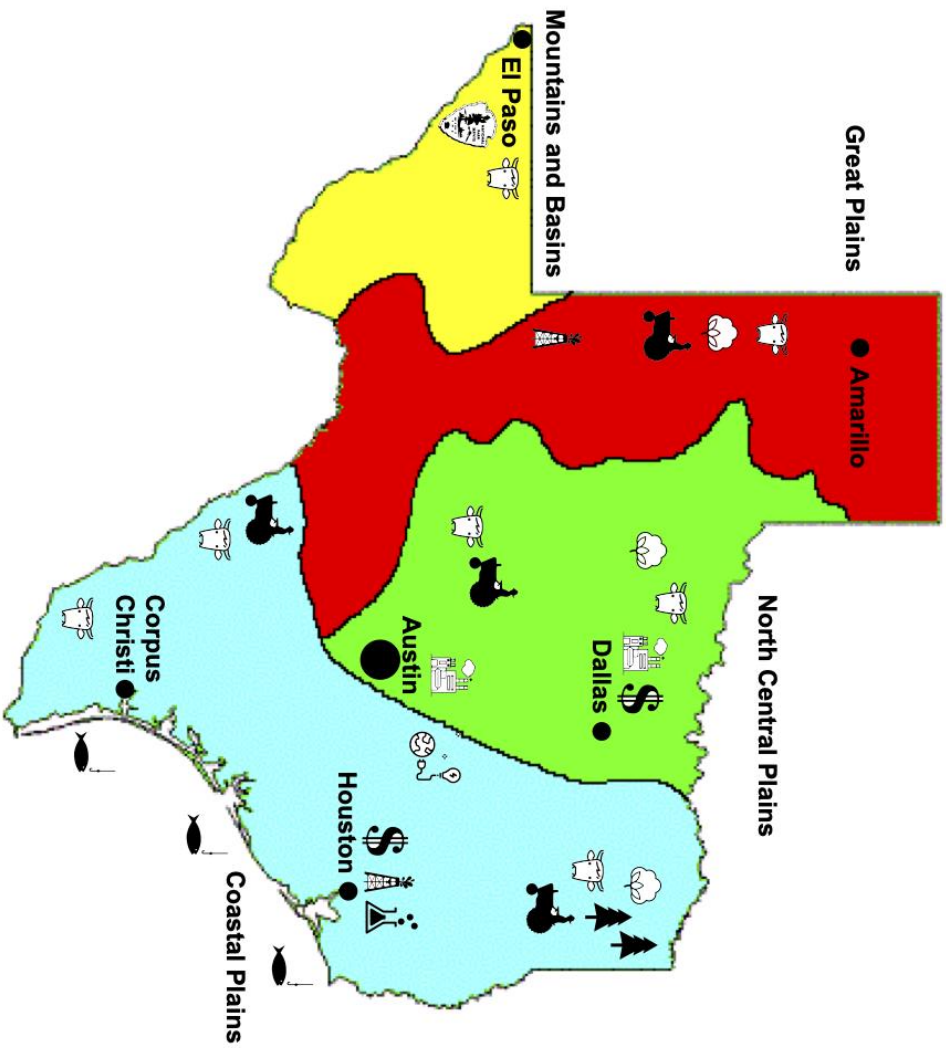
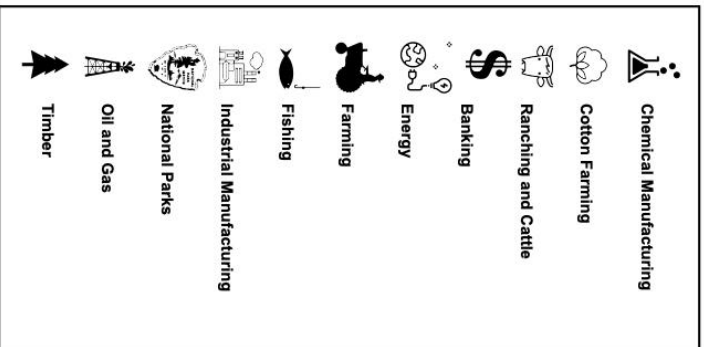
Highest Point: **Guadalupe Peak – 8,751 feet**

Motto: **Friendship**

Source: <https://mrnussbaum.com/texas-fact-sheet>

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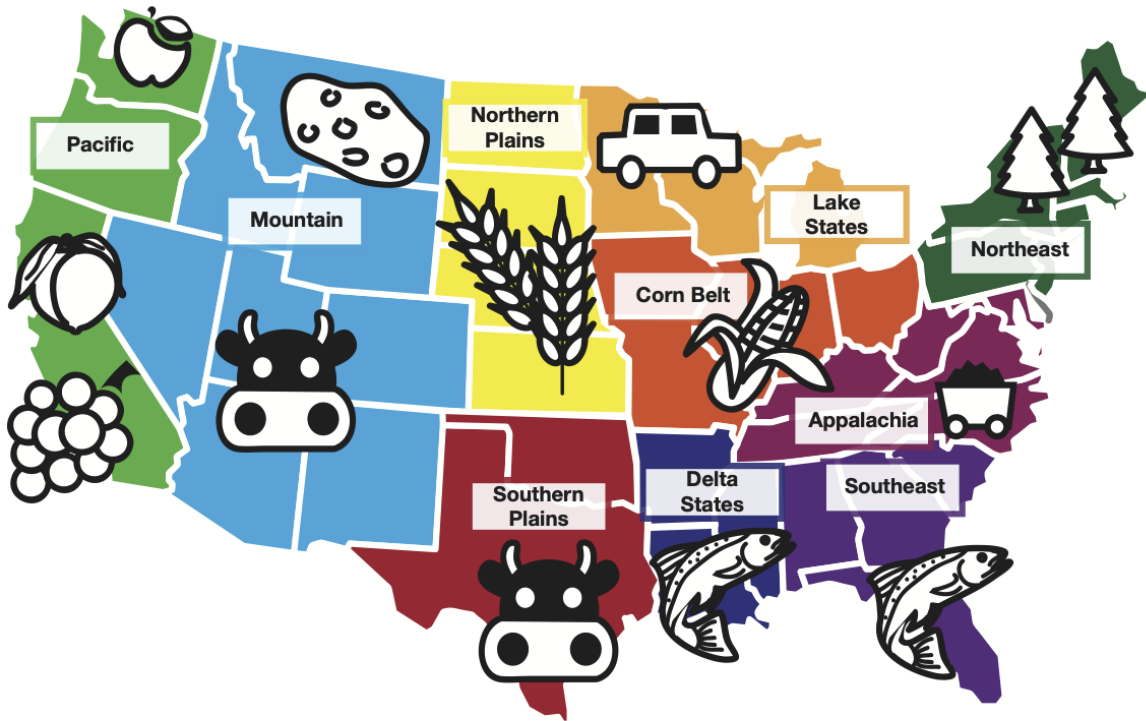
Texas Economic Regions



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Land Use Map

Use the map to answer the questions below.



1) What does the Pacific region of the United States produce? _____

2) What region in the United States is known for farming corn? _____

3) Where would you find a lot of car makers in the United States? _____

4) The Mountain States and Southern Plains have what in common? _____

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The Great Depression:

As part of the study on the Great Depression educators may explore a young Lyndon Johnson’s contribution to Texas as part of the New Deal programs initiated by the Roosevelt administration. In 1935, at the age of twenty-six Lyndon Johnson was appointed Director of the Texas division of the newly created National Youth Administration, nestled under the Works Program Administration (WPA). He was the youngest leader of any New Deal program. The goal of this program was to offer work for youth not enrolled in schools, provide work study jobs for both high school and college students, provide apprenticeships, and summer youth camps.



<http://www.lbjlibrary.net/collections/photo-archive.html>

Johnson’s clever programs were appreciated in Texas communities. Hundreds of thousands of Texas youth participated in the program. The NYA’s environmental legacy lives on in the Texas Hill Country through its restoration project of Villita Historic Arts Village in San Antonio, the many roadside picnic areas created by the project teams, and the improvement of Inks Lake State Park in western Burnet County.

The Roosevelt Administration adamantly urged Johnson and all NYA directors to include African American students and young people in their programs, yet Johnson pushed back which is surprising considering his future works with civil rights and the legislative acts passed during his presidential administration.

The provided primary sources from the archives of the LBJ library allow students to analyze the benefits of the NYA projects to the environment, communities, and participants. Provided sources also facilitate discussion on how Johnson worked within the confines of Jim Crow segregation in a southern state to provide economic opportunities for African American youth. The NYA was one of the few New Deal programs that equally funded African American participation. These sources do contain racially sensitive terms used in the era the source was created. A possible warm up for discussion could consider if Lyndon Johnson could have done more to expand NYA programs to minority populations in Texas? What were the structural barriers to that expansion?

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Multiple Age Activity: Video Analysis

Although younger students will not understand the full economic causes and resulting consequences of the financial crash, they can comprehend that President Roosevelt tried to revive the economy through a series of administrative initiatives packaged as the New Deal and Second New Deal. One such program was the National Youth Administration.

After explaining LBJ’s role in the Texas program have students watch the short video linked here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8R6u-jvrnVs&t=18s>

This 1937 government produced silent film demonstrates different work opportunities, for boys, related to the aviation industry in Tampa, Florida. Students may complete the primary source video analysis worksheet, created by National Archives and available for multiple grade levels, linked below.

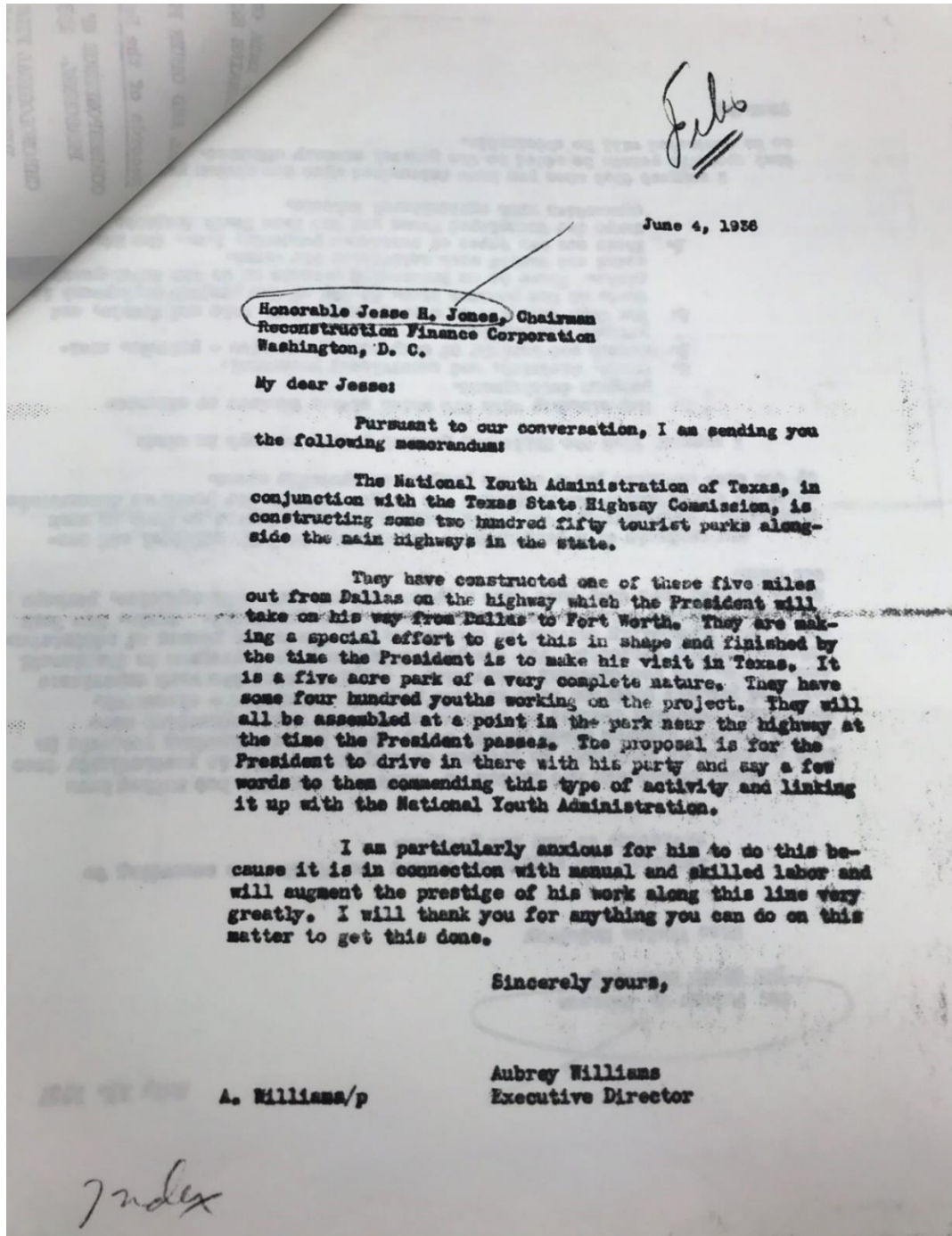
<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets>

This lesson provides an opportunity to discuss both the gendered and racial components of New Deal programs.

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Activity: Analyze the effects of NYA projects on local communities using primary sources. The main idea of this source follows the document. Students may use the Analyze a Primary Source document provided by National Archives including in this guide or found at:

<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets>



Source: Archives at LBJ Library

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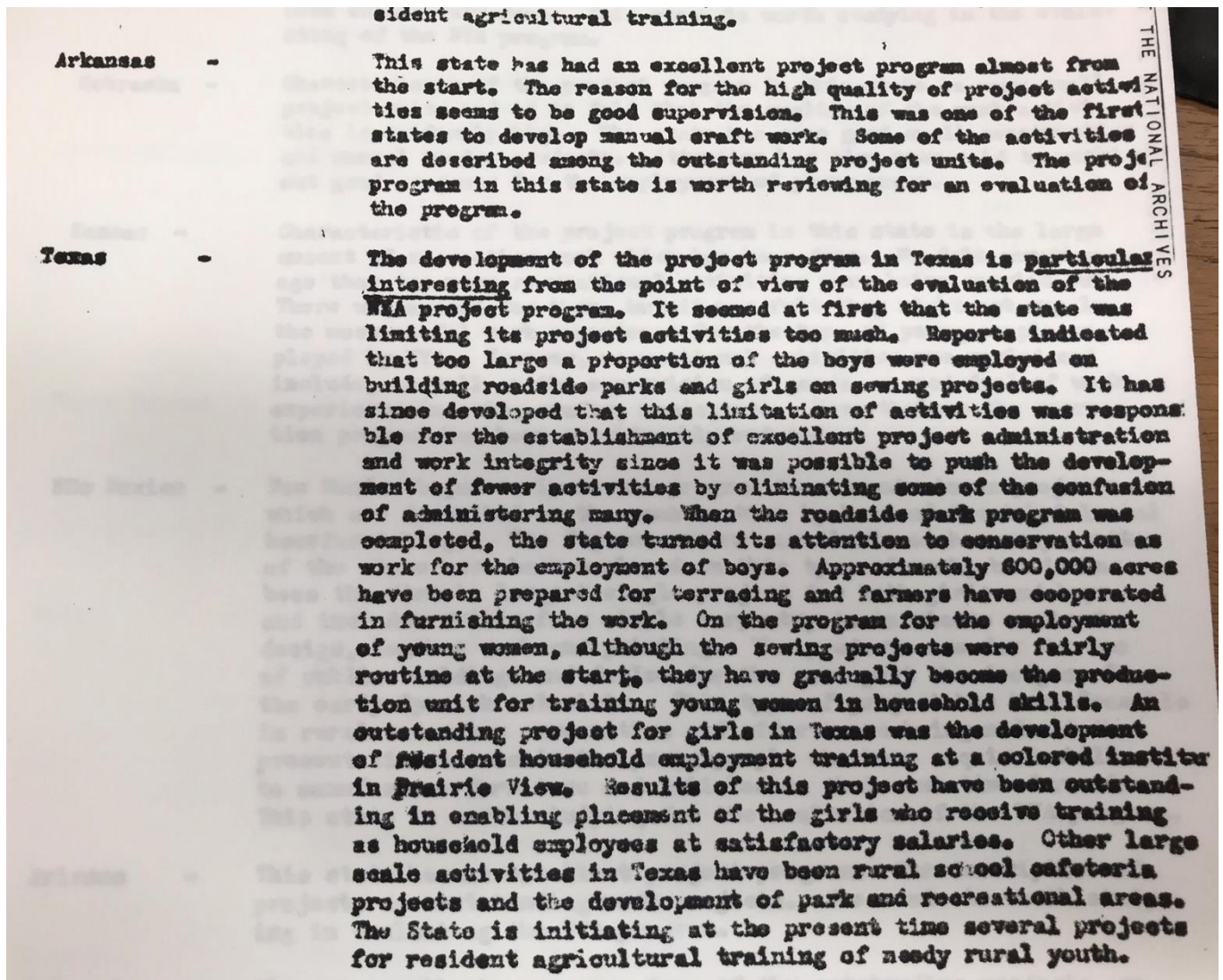
Activity Continued: Source Main Idea

This letter was written by Aubrey Williams, the executive director of President Roosevelt’s National Youth Administration. He oversaw the work of Texas director Lyndon Johnson. Mr. Williams wrote to Jesse Jones, the chairman of the Reconstruction Finance Committee and overseer of how large sums of federal money was distributed to industries affected by the Great Depression.

Mr. Williams discusses the partnership between the Texas NYA and the Texas State Highway Commission in building rest area parks alongside the state’s main highways. Mr. Williams explains the types of parks built by the boys of the NYA and hopes President Roosevelt will stop at one during his trip to Dallas, Texas. The hope was that President Roosevelt’s approval of the project would bring importance to the work of the NYA.

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Activity: Analyze the effects of the NYA projects on local communities using primary sources.



Source: Archives at LBJ Library

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Activity: Analyze the effect of NYA projects on local communities

Source: Archives at LBJ Library

The Houston Post
June 21, 1936

NYA AIDS SCHOOL CHILDREN



Three hundred and fifty youths employed part time by the National Youth Administration are building shell sidewalks along Humble highway on each side of the Berry school, so children may walk to the school in safety.

Uncle Sam Plays Practical Santa to Children Of Berry School Section Through Youth Agency

By BESS WHITEHEAD SCOTT.

Santa Claus with the jingle bells and pack on his back is just another pretty story, perhaps, to the fourth and fifth grade children of Berry school on Humble road, for the modern youngster of this age takes his fairy stories with a grain of salt.

But Berry school children have a patron saint none the less, and one who is putting into their collective sock the gifts of safety, individual responsibility and a tremendous pride in their school community.

This practical Santa is none other than Uncle Sam, working through the national youth administration. In co-operation with the Texas highway department, the NYA is bringing to the Berry school community a guarantee of safety for the children by building sidewalks for two miles north and south of the school on both sides of this much-traveled, paved highway.

The children of the safety council of Berry school believe this recently opened NYA project is a culmination of their efforts toward greater safety for the student body. It was three years ago a little girl, on her way to school, was knocked from the highway and killed by a car. Shortly afterward a boy student suffered a broken leg when hit by a car on this same highway. The older children of the school and their principal, Mrs. Ruth R. Whit-

mire, took counsel, and made an earnest start in teaching safety rules to the younger children.

The Berry School Safety council was organized, with the fourth and fifth grades as active members and the children of the lower grades as associate members. These children draw up their own safety rules, teach them in meeting and on the school grounds to other children, and serve as a trial court and jury to try students who have been guilty of violation of the safety rules.

From the viewpoint of the NYA officials, the sidewalk project is one of the most worth-while units of the national program in Harris county, according to W. O. Alexander, district director. The benefits, Mr. Alexander said, are three-fold in that the work guarantees safety to the children, a civic improvement for the community, and part-time employment to 350 young men for six months.

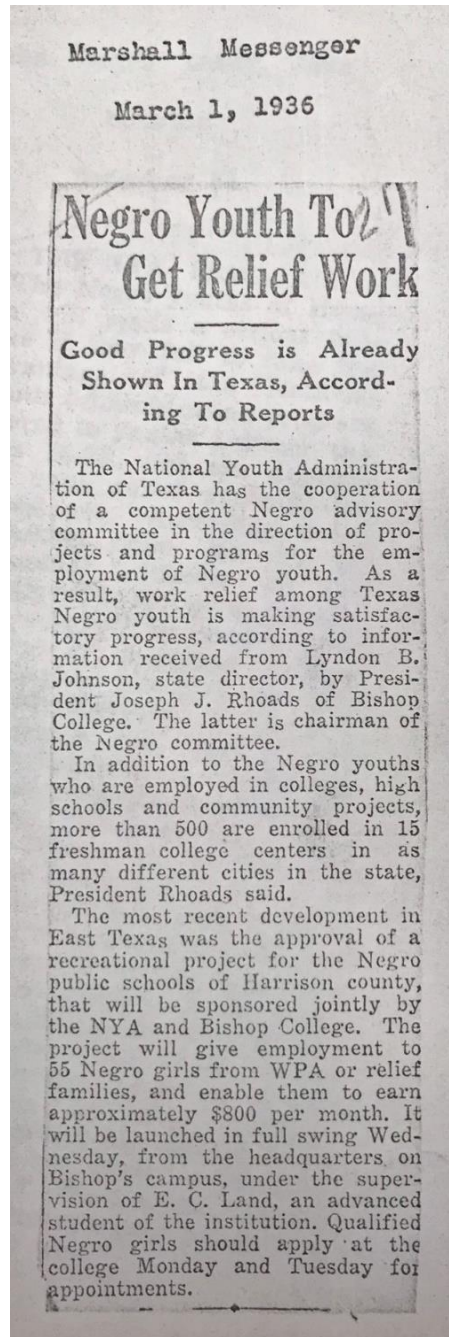
The Texas highway department is co-operating, in that it furnishes the shell for topping the walks, trucks and other equipment for the work, and two supervisors to aid in directing the work.

Workers on the project, according to NYA eligibility rules, are between 16 and 25 years of age and from families on relief. They are given 46 hours' work a month on the various highway projects of the county, and paid \$2 per working day. Other NYA highway projects now in operation in Harris county are on the Katy road, five miles from Houston; on the La Porte road near the San Jacinto battle ground; at Morgans Point, and on the Pasadena highway.

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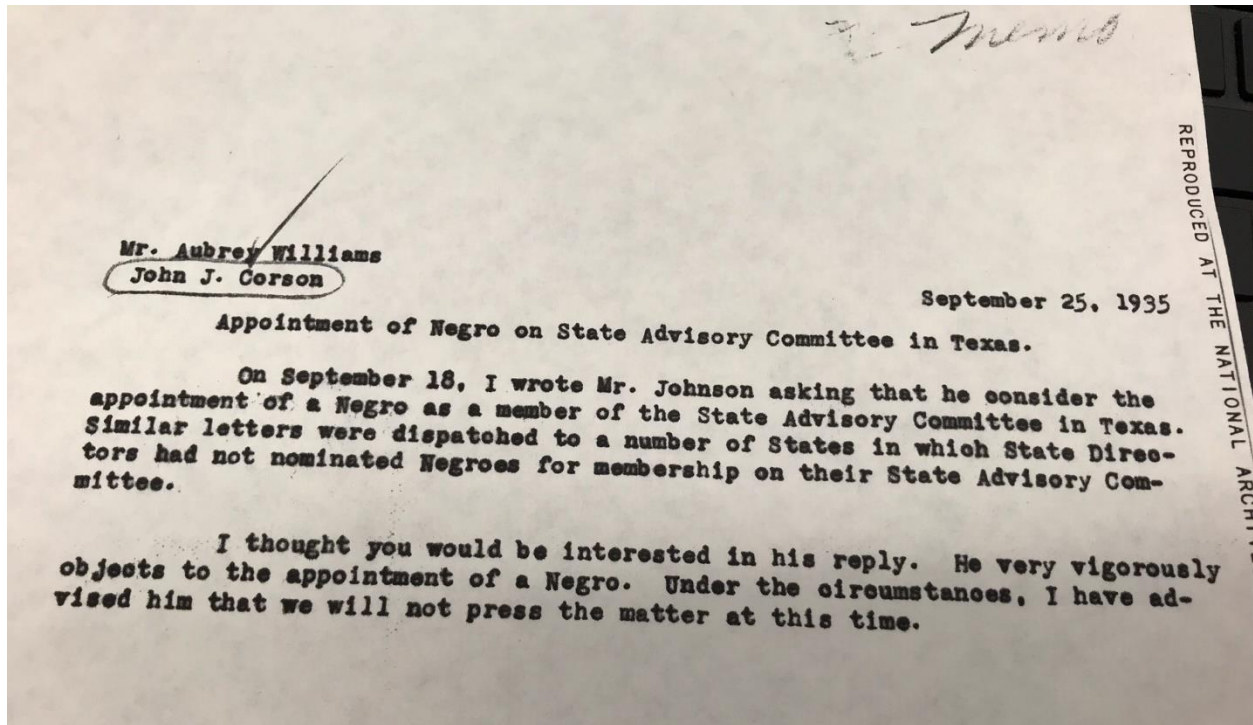
Activity: Analyze the following sources to consider Johnson’s role in expanding NYA funding to the African American community. Watch the You Tube video referenced below then answer the following question on a separate sheet of paper: His the program’s success measured in 1936?

Source: Archives at LBJ Library. Silent footage of African American youth participating in NYA programs: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVK_FFMWJhM



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Activity: After reading through the following sources why did Johnson not want to include an African American on the state advisory board? Discuss with a partner.

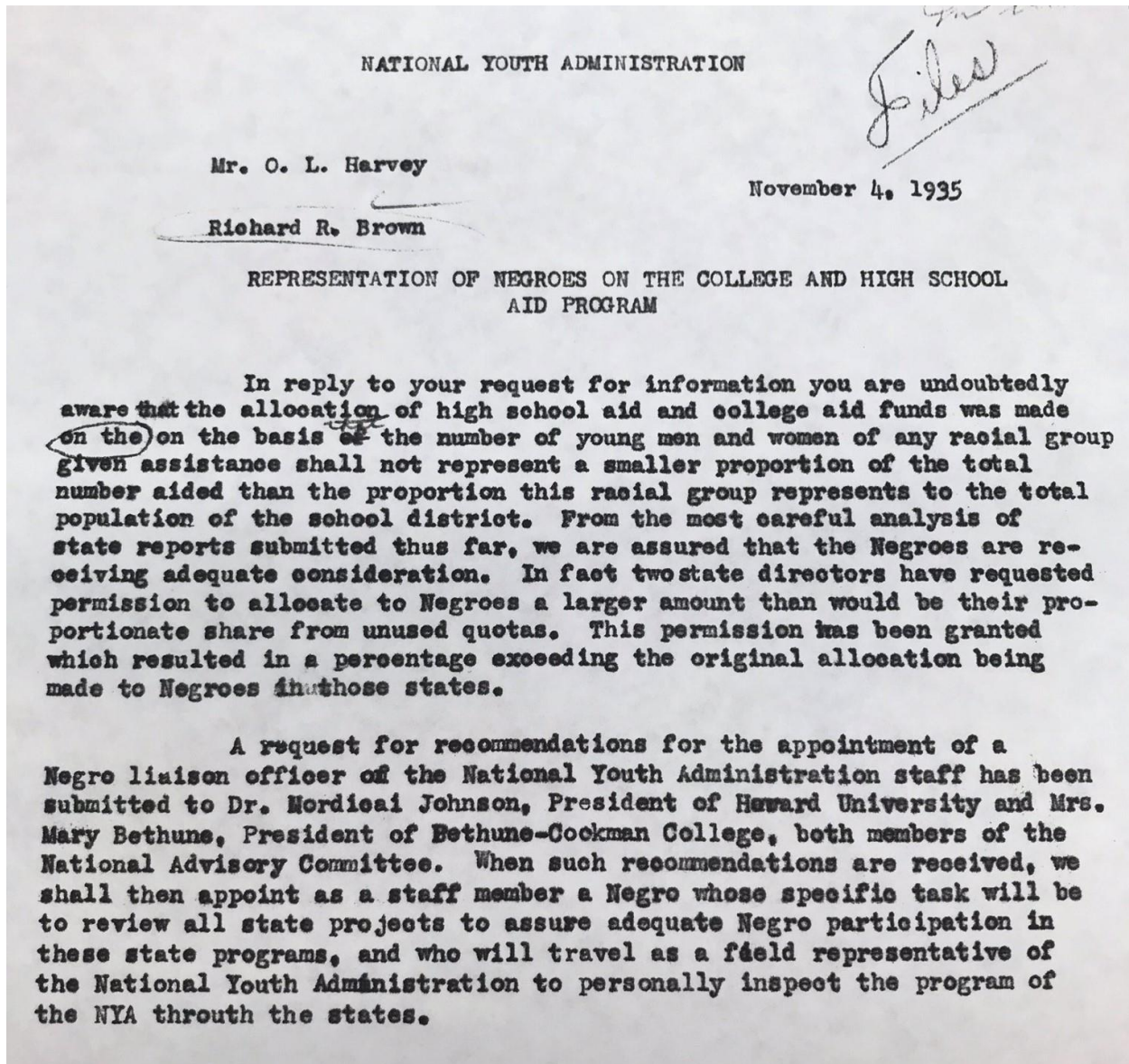


Source: Memo from the internal files of the NYA located in the LBJ Library's archives. Aubrey Williams was the Executive Director of the NYA.

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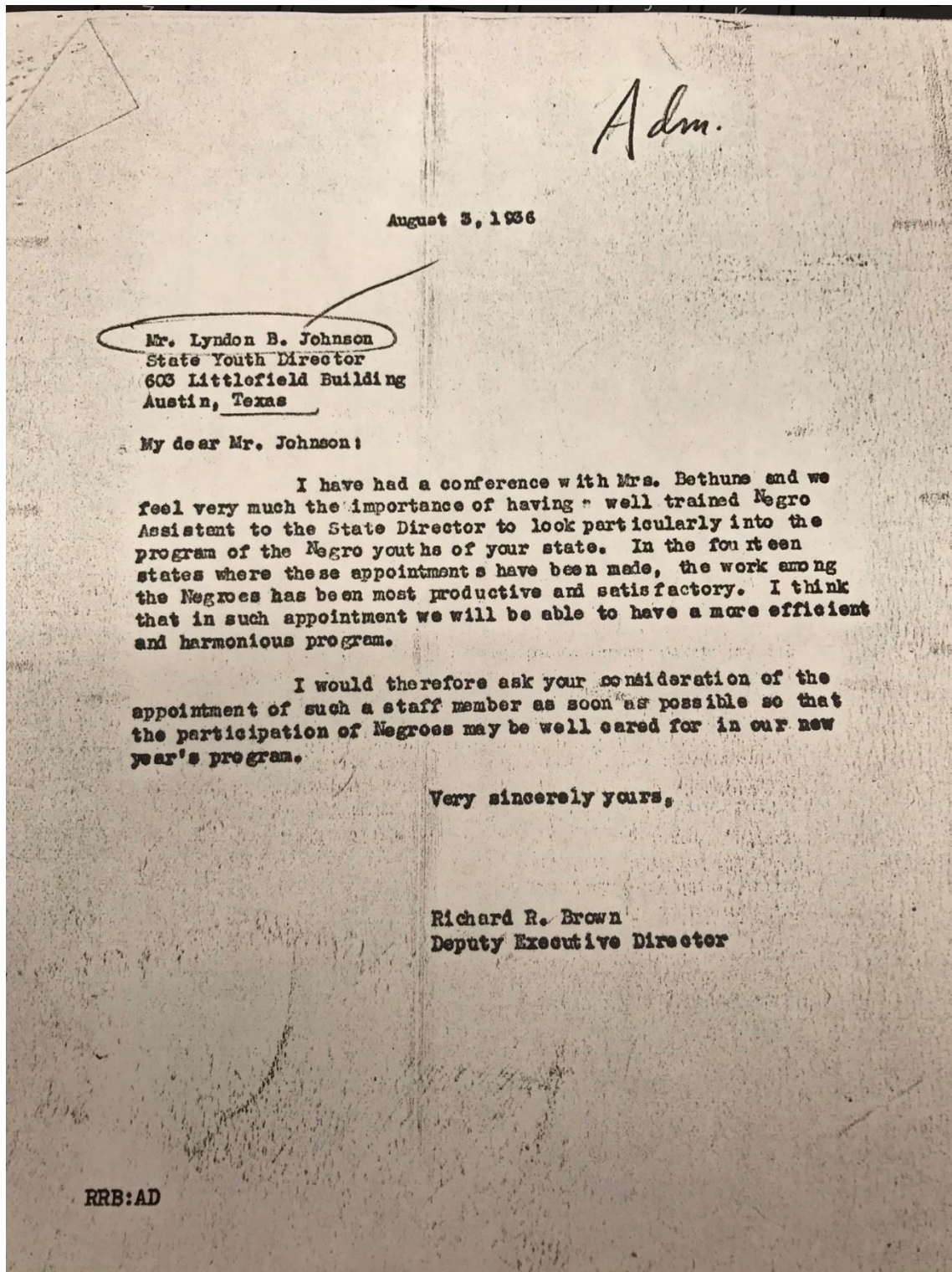
Activity: The federal government demands inclusion of African American’s participation in leadership of NYA programs, yet the Texas Director declines. The agency still complies with funding and educational opportunities as required. Why do you think Johnson made that decision?

Source: Archives at LBJ Library



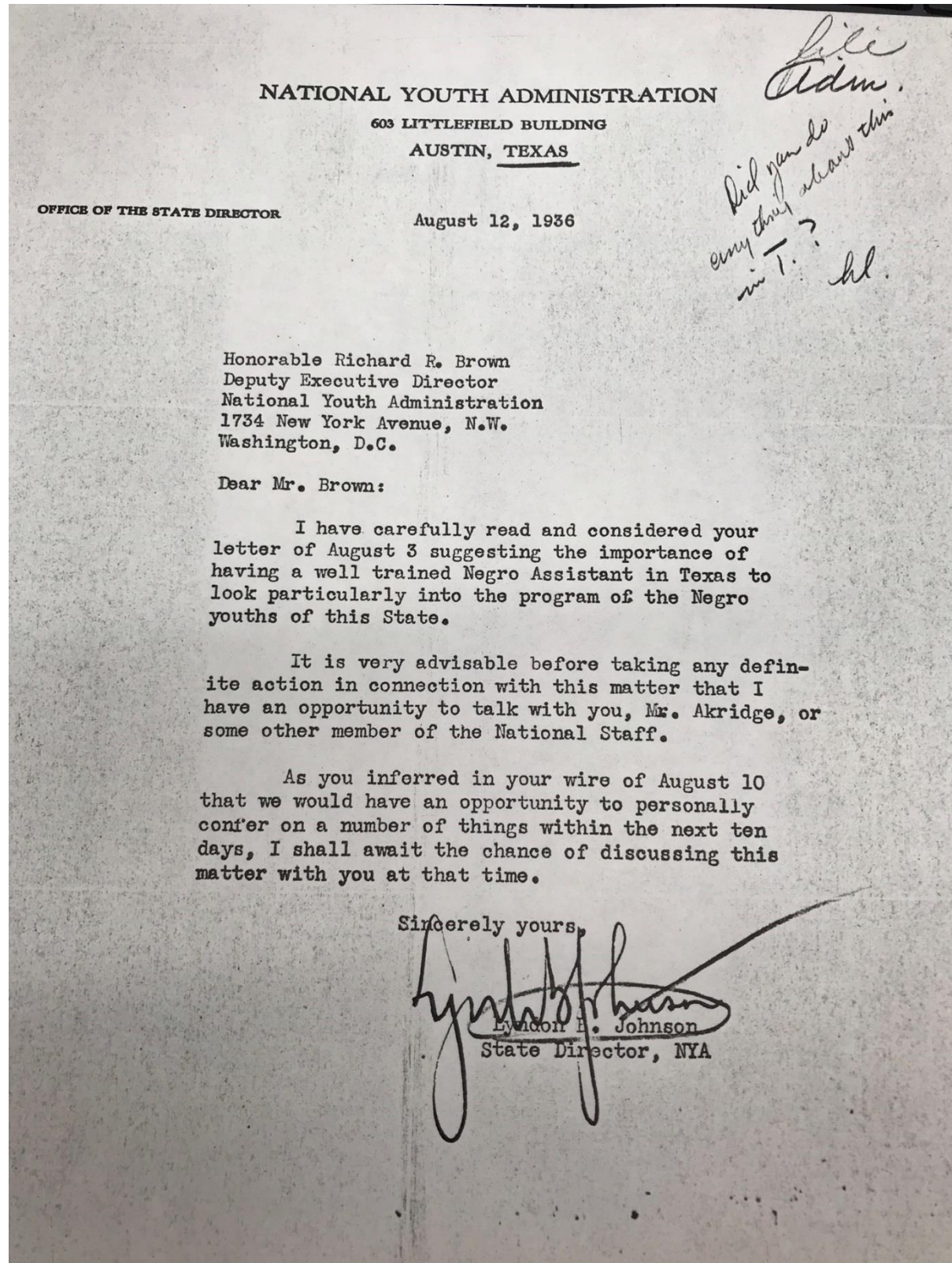
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Source: Archives at LBJ Library



"Creative Conservation:" The Environmental Legacy of Pres. Lyndon B. Johnson 1963-1969

Source: Archives at LBJ Library



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Rural Electrification Administration

America's farmers were among the last citizens to gain access to electricity in the early 20th century, affecting a great many Texas residents. Farmers lived a pioneer existence as they still used kerosene lamps for light, hand cranked their washing machines for laundry cleaning, and cooked over an open fire or wood burning range. Farmers begged electric companies to bring electricity into their homes. Utility companies denied the farmers' pleas claiming the process too expensive to be cost effective for their bottom line.

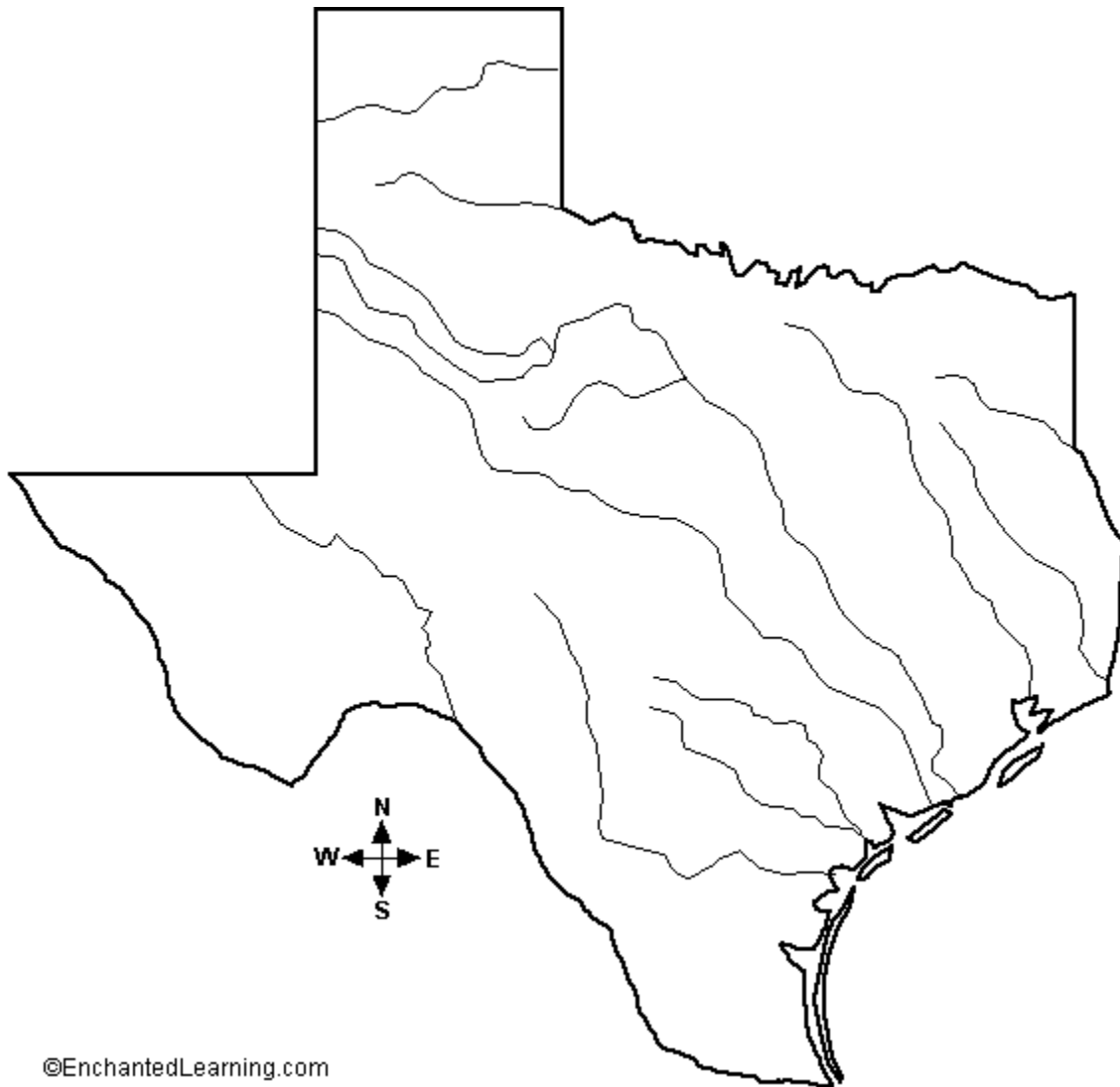
Arguments over who owned hydroelectric power stewed for decades. Powerful utility companies lobbied against government interference to maintain control over the generated power. Upon President Roosevelt's election in 1933 he set out to pass legislation to bring electricity, via dam construction, to a broader section of the population, believing there was a direct correlation to quality of life. In May of 1935 President Roosevelt signed an executive order creating the Rural Electrification Administration. One year later Congress passed the REA bill allowing the agency to make loans to farmers for electric improvements allowing them to form their own cooperatives separate from the electric companies. However, change happened slowly in the Texas Hill Country.

Congressman Johnson, a freshmen representative, promised local residents that he would be the one to bring electricity to the Hill Country when the pleas of the Hill Country farmers went unanswered. The area was still sparsely populated, and some residents feared the commitment of a monthly bill on their already meager earnings, they feared the legal forms necessary to start the process with the REA, and most importantly scared of electricity. Without full support the REA would not loan the needed money. Johnson and friend, Babe Smith, drove to local picnics on July 4th, 1938 persuading people to sign the required application. Together Smith and Johnson showed pictures of appliances in the Sears & Roebuck catalog as a persuasion technique. Finally, the undeterred freshman Congressman from Texas secured a meeting with the President asking for his assistance. **Despite Johnson lacking the needed number of signatures to secure the loan from the REA, the President of the United States made a phone call asking for this one rule to be broken, citing a belief that the population would increase over time. On September 27, 1938, the REA approved the loan which could build over 1800 miles of electric lines serving almost 3,000 Hill Country farms and homes.**

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Activity: Label the Texas Rivers. Then draw the dams/reservoirs in your area that were created with REA funds using the primary source from the Texas Water Commission Report from 1964. Using the same sources map two dams built in the Austin area. How did population growth affect the physical environment?

Compare and Contrast the population in Austin, Texas in 1930 and today. One helpful source is: https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Planning/Demographics/population_history_pub.pdf

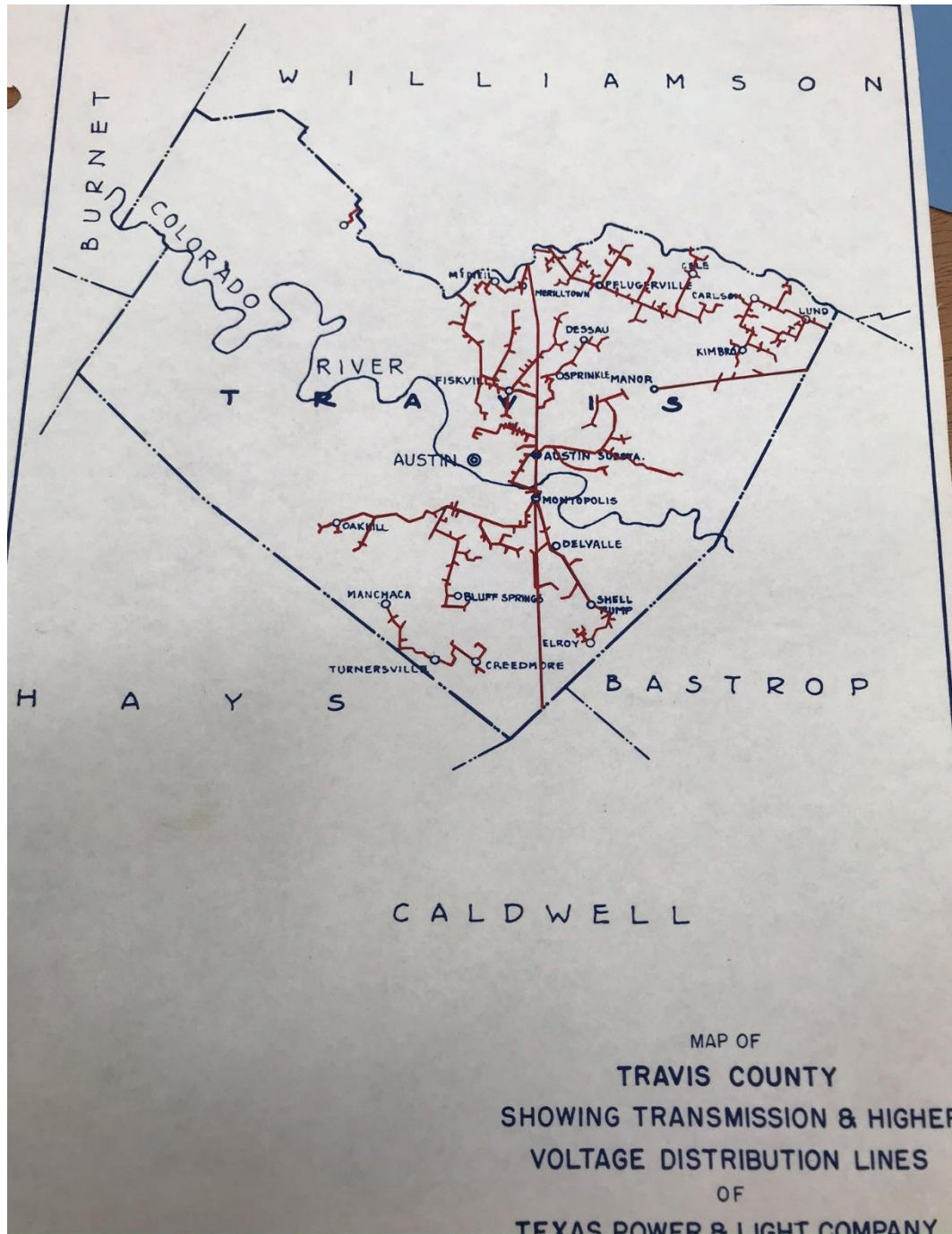


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Activity: Meet the Photo. Use the Meet the Photo worksheet to analyze the photo.

Map of Travis County included in a report of service by Texas Power and Light Company showing the current power lines in 1938.



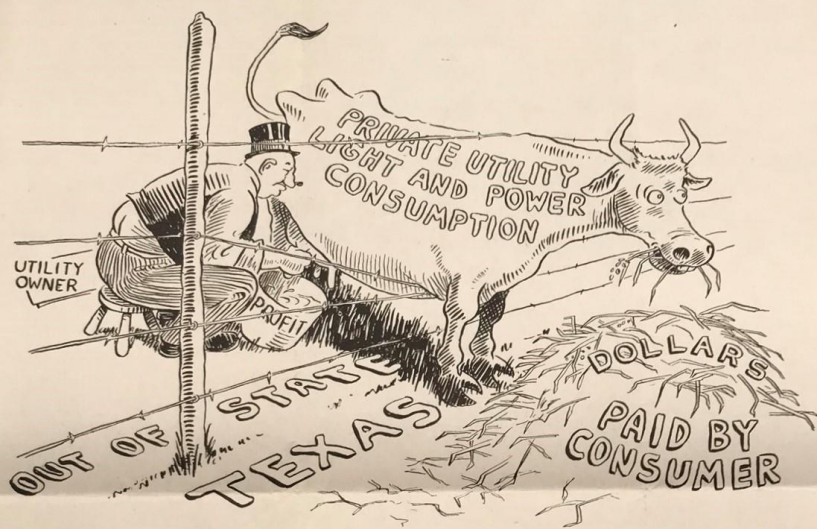
Source: Archives at LBJ Library

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Activity: "Meet the Cartoon" Use the Analyze a Cartoon worksheet to determine this cartoon's importance.

Source: Cartoon and statement found in the archives of the LBJ Library in information pertaining to the REA.

Let's Have Both Ends of Her



Light and power consumption in Texas in the past largely has been like a great big cow with her head and her front feet in Texas and her hind feet and udder in the financial centers of the North and East.

This big cow has been EATING OFF OF Texas for years, waxing fat from high power rates; while up in New York, the private utility barons have been milking her for BIG PROFITS.

All but a SMALL PER CENT of the thousands upon thousands that we have been paying for light and power have been SHIPPED AWAY to the power trust in the great financial centers of the North and East.

Now in Central Texas, we have a chance to TURN THE COW AROUND and have both ends of her.

The Lower Colorado River Authority is offering the cheap power it will generate to cities of this section. If they take advantage of this opportunity, theirs, in the form of lower rates, city improvements, and lower taxes, will be the rich profits the power interests are now milking from them in HIGH RATES.

You can help turn that cow around by voting FOR MUNICIPAL OWNERSHIP so we can have the benefits of cheap power for ourselves and —

Keep Our Money at Home

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Activity: “Meet the Photo” Use the Analyze a Photograph worksheet to determine this photograph’s relevance.

Source: Photo included in a 1938 report made by the Texas Power and Light Company in the archives of the LBJ Library.



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Activity: “Meet the Video” Use the Analyze a Video worksheet provided by National Archives, found at <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets> to determine this video’s relevance.

You Tube video on life before electricity

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jaFEVPWAmnY>

You Tube video, “Energy 101 Hydro Power”
by Department of Energy, April 2013.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tpigNNTQix8>

Consider the following:

How would life be different without electricity in our homes and schools?

How does geography affect energy sources?

What was LBJ’s role in bringing electricity to the Hill Country?

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TEKS 113.16. Social Studies, Grade 5, Adopted 2018

Knowledge and Skills

(5) History. The student understands important issues, events, and individuals in the United States during the 20th and 21st centuries. The student is expected to:

(A) explain the significance of issues and events of the 20th century such as industrialization, urbanization, the Great Depression, the world wars, the civil rights movement, and military actions;

(C) identify the accomplishments and contributions of individuals and groups such as Susan B. Anthony, Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Cesar Chavez, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, the Tuskegee Airmen, and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team in the areas of civil rights, women's rights, military actions, and politics

(6) Geography. The student understands places and regions in the United States. The student is expected to:

(A) describe political and economic regions in the United States that result from patterns of human activity

(7) Geography. The student understands the location and patterns of settlement and the geographic factors that influence where people live. The student is expected to:

(A) identify and describe the patterns of settlement such as rural, urban, and suburban;

(B) explain the geographic factors that influence patterns of settlement and the distribution of population in the United States; and

(C) analyze the geographic factors that influence the location of the five largest urban areas in the United States and explain their distribution.

(8) Geography. The student understands how people adapt to and modify their environment. The student is expected to:

(A) describe how and why people have adapted to and modified their environment in the United States such as the use of human resources to meet basic needs; and

(B) analyze the positive and negative consequences of human modification of the environment in the United States

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TEKS 113.16. Social Studies, Grade 5, Continued

(12) Economics. The student understands patterns of work and economic Activity in the United States. The student is expected to:

- (A) compare how people in different regions of the United States earn a living, past and present;
- (B) identify and explain how geographic factors have influenced the location of economic Activity in the United States

(18) Citizenship. The student understands the importance of effective leadership in a constitutional republic. The student is expected to:

- (A) identify past and present leaders in the national government, including the president and various members of Congress, and their political parties; and
- (B) identify leadership qualities of national leaders, past and present.

(22) Science, technology, and society. The student understands the impact of science and technology on society in the United States. The student is expected to:

- (A) identify the accomplishments of notable individuals in the fields of science and technology such as Benjamin Franklin, Eli Whitney, John Deere, Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, George Washington Carver, the Wright Brothers, and Neil Armstrong;
- (B) identify how scientific discoveries, technological innovations, and the rapid growth of technology industries have advanced the economic development of the United States, including the transcontinental railroad and the space program; and

(12) Economics. The student understands patterns of work and economic Activity in the United States. The student is expected to:

- (A) compare how people in different regions of the United States earn a living, past and present;
- (B) identify and explain how geographic factors have influenced the location of economic Activity in the United States

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TEKS - 113.17 Social Studies, Grade 6

Knowledge and Skills

(2) A and B History: The student understands the influences of individuals and groups from various cultures on various historical and contemporary societies.

(3) Geography: the student understands the factors that influence the locations and characteristics of locations of various contemporary societies on maps and/or globes. The student is expected to:

- (A) Identify and explain the geographic factors responsible for patterns of population in places and regions
- (C) Identify and locate major physical and human geographic features such as landforms, water bodies, and urban centers of various places and regions

(5) Geography: The student understands the impact of interactions between people and the physical environment on the development and conditions of places and regions. The student is expected to:

- (A) Identify and analyze ways people have modified the physical environment such as mining, irrigation and transportation infrastructure

(18) Science, technology and society: the student understands the influences of science and technology on contemporary societies. The student is expected to:

- (A) Identify examples of scientific discoveries, technological innovations, and scientists and inventors that have shaped the world
- (B) Explain how resources, economic factors, and political decisions affect the use of technology.

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TEKS 113.19 Social Studies, Grade 7, Texas History

Knowledge and Skills

(1) History. The student understands traditional historical points of reference in Texas history. The student is expected to:

(A) Identify the major eras in Texas history, describe their defining characteristics, and explain the purpose of dividing the past into eras, including Natural Texas and its People; Age of Contact; Spanish Colonial; Mexican National; Revolution and Republic; Early Statehood; Texas in the Civil War and Reconstruction; Cotton, Cattle, and Railroads; Age of Oil; Texas in the Great Depression and World War II; Civil Rights; and Contemporary Texas

(7) History. The student understands how individuals, events, and issues shaped the history of Texas during the late 19th, 20th, and early 21st centuries. The student is expected to

(E) analyze the political, economic, and social impact of World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, and significant issues in the latter half of the 20th and early 21st centuries such as political and economic controversies, immigration, and migration on the history of Texas.

(8) Geography. The student understands the location and characteristics of places and regions of Texas. The student is expected to:

(A) locate and compare the Mountains and Basins, Great Plains, North Central Plains, and Coastal Plains regions;

(B) locate and compare places of importance in Texas in terms of physical and human characteristics such as major cities, waterways, natural and historic landmarks, political and cultural regions, and local points of interest; and

(C) analyze the effects of physical and human factors such as climate, weather, landforms, irrigation, transportation, and communication on major events in Texas.

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TEKS 113.19 Social Studies, Grade 7, Texas History Continued

(9) Geography. The student understands the effects of the interaction between humans and the environment in Texas. The student is expected to:

(A) identify ways in which Texans have adapted to and modified the environment and explain the positive and negative consequences of the modifications; and

(B) explain ways in which geographic factors such as the Galveston Hurricane of 1900, the Dust Bowl, limited water resources, and alternative energy sources have affected the political, economic, and social development of Texas.

(17) Citizenship. The student understands the importance of effective leadership in a democratic society. The student is expected to:

(A) Identify the leadership qualities of elected and appointed leaders of Texas, past and present, including Texas who have been president of the United States; and

(B) Identify the contributions of Texas leaders such as Lyndon Baines Johnson to Texas.

(19) Science, technology, and society. The student understands the impact of scientific discoveries and technological innovations on the political, economic, and social development of Texas. The student is expected to

(A) compare types and uses of technology, past and present;

(D) evaluate the effects of scientific discoveries and technological innovations on the use of resources such as fossil fuels, water, and land; and

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TEKS, 113.41 United States History Studies Since 1877

Knowledge and Skills.

(2) History. The student understands traditional historical points of reference in U.S. history from 1877 to the present. The student is expected to:

A) identify the major eras in U.S. history from 1877 to the present and describe their defining characteristics; and.

(B) explain the significance of the following years as turning points: 1929 (the Great Depression begins), 1939-1945

(9) History. The student understands the impact of the American civil rights movement. The student is expected to:

(B) explain how Jim Crow laws and the Ku Klux Klan created obstacles to civil rights for minorities such as the suppression of voting;

(14) Geography. The student understands the relationship between population growth and the physical environment. The student is expected to:

(A) identify the effects of population growth and distribution on the physical environment; and

(B) identify the roles of governmental entities and private citizens in managing the environment such as the establishment of the National Park System, the Environmental Protection Agency and Endangered Species Act.

(18) Government. The student understands changes over time in the role of government. The student is expected to:

(A) evaluate the impact of New Deal legislation on the historical roles of state and federal government

(B) explain constitutional issues raised by federal government policy changes during times of significant events, including World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, the 1960s, and September 11, 2001

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(23) Citizenship. The student understands the importance of effective leadership in a constitutional republic. The student is expected to:

(A) evaluate the contributions of significant political and social leaders in the United States such as Andrew Carnegie, Thurgood Marshall, Billy Graham, Sandra Day O'Connor, and Hillary Clinton; and

(B) evaluate the impact of relationships among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government, including Franklin D. Roosevelt's attempt to increase the number of U.S. Supreme Court justices and the presidential election of 2000.

(26) Science, technology, and society. The student understands the impact of science, technology, and the free enterprise system on the economic development of the United States. The student is expected to:

(A) explain the effects of scientific discoveries and technological innovations such as electric power, telephone and satellite communications, petroleum-based products, steel production, and computers on the economic development of the United States;

(B) explain how specific needs result in scientific discoveries and technological innovations in agriculture, the military, and medicine; and

(27) Science, technology, and society. The student understands the influence of scientific discoveries, technological innovations, and the free enterprise system on the standard of living in the United States.

(A) analyze how scientific discoveries, technological innovations, space exploration, and the application of these by the free enterprise system improve the standard of living in the United States, including changes in transportation and communication

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Sources for President Johnson and the Texas Hill Country

Great Depression Sources on National Youth Administration

Primary Sources:

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Oral History of President Lyndon B. Johnson by Michael L Gille 4/16/1970:

President Johnson, interviewed by Michael L Gille, about his relationship with President Roosevelt after his election to the House of Representatives in 1937. President Johnson recalls the helpfulness of the Roosevelt administration in getting his initiatives passed, many of which were life changing for Texas residents. President Johnson specifically mentions “the Colorado River, aid for the farmers, aid for youth projects, public buildings, public grants for electric systems, and so forth.” The interview goes on to describe President Roosevelt’s support of the Colorado River development. The goal of this project, according to LBJ, was to conserve water and provide affordable electricity.

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Sources for Great Depression Rural Electrification Administration

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