



# File IV

## Activity III

### Document Based Critical Thinking Skills

**Materials Included:**

Activity Directions for the Teacher

FDR's First Inaugural Speech

1. Document

2. Audio

Second Option – FDR's Fire Side Chat (Audio only)

Homework Assignment

Student Activity Assignment and Directions

Group Scenario Sheets (1 – 4)

## Activity III - Document Based Critical Thinking Skills



### Materials provided

Downloadable audio sound of FDR's First Inaugural on March 4, 1933, and the Fireside Chat on Banking – March 12, 1933, is enclosed.

A hard copy of FDR's First Inaugural on March 4, 1933.

### Activity directions for the teacher:

- As a class, listen to the audio-CD of FDR's First Inaugural Address. Explain to students that FDR's speech was broadcast over the radio in 1933. Most Americans sat close to the radio listening intently.
- After listening to the CD give the students a hard copy of the speech and the assignment questions. You may choose to have students do this as homework or a class assignment. This activity will give the students a foundation for the debate activity.
- After the students complete the homework assignment divide them into four groups. Assign each group to a character role (farmers, unemployed, urban entrepreneurs, and families). Each group should be given their debate questions and scenario. Have the students read their scenario as a group and then read and discuss the debate questions. Each group should prepare to present their situation in a debate format to present to the class.

### Assignment

After listening to and reading FDR's First Inaugural Address, ask the students to discuss and prepare for a class debate on the issues from the perspective of their various character roles (Farmers, an Unemployed American, an American Family, and an Urban Entrepreneur) from the 1930's. The scenarios and debate questions are on the following pages.

# Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address

## March 4, 1933

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I am certain that my fellow Americans expect that on my induction into the Presidency I will address them with a candor and a decision, which the present situation of our Nation impels. This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself--nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life, a leadership of frankness and vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves, which is essential to victory. I am convinced that you will again give that support to leadership in these critical days.

In such a spirit on my part, and on yours, we face our common difficulties. They concern, thank God, only material things. Values have shrunken to fantastic levels; taxes have risen; our ability to pay has fallen; government of all kinds is faced by serious curtailment of income; the means of exchange are frozen in the currents of trade; the withered leaves of industrial enterprise lie on every side; farmers find no markets for their produce; the savings of many years in thousands of families are gone. More important, a host of unemployed citizens face the grim problem of existence and an equally great number toil with little return. Only a foolish optimist can deny the dark realities of the moment.

Yet our distress comes from no failure of substance. We are stricken by no plague of locusts. Compared with the perils which our forefathers conquered, because they believed and were not afraid, we have still much to be thankful for. Nature still offers her bounty and human efforts have multiplied it. Plenty is at our doorstep, but a generous use of it languishes in the very sight of the supply. Primarily this is because the rulers of the exchange of mankind's goods have failed, through their own stubbornness and their own incompetence, have admitted their failure, and abdicated. Practices of the unscrupulous money-changers stand indicted in the court of public opinion, rejected by the hearts and minds of men.

True they have tried, but their efforts have been cast in the pattern of an outworn tradition. Faced by failure of credit they have proposed only the lending of more money.

Stripped of the lure of profit by which to induce our people to follow their false leadership, they have resorted to exhortations, pleading tearfully for restored confidence. They know only the rules of a generation of self-seekers. They have no vision, and when there is no vision the people perish. The money-changers have fled from their high seats in the temple of our civilization. We may now restore that temple to the ancient truths. The measure of the restoration lies in the extent to which we apply social values more noble than mere monetary profit.

Happiness lies not in the mere possession of money; it lies in the joy of achievement, in the thrill of creative effort. The joy and moral stimulation of work, no longer must be forgotten in the mad chase of evanescent profits. These dark days will be worth all they cost us if they teach us that our true destiny is not to be ministered unto, but to minister to ourselves and to our fellow men.

Recognition of the falsity of material wealth as the standard of success, goes hand-in-hand with the abandonment of the false belief that public office, and high political position, are to be valued only by the standards of pride of place and personal profit; and, there must be an end to a conduct in banking and in business which, too often, has given to a sacred trust, the likeness of callous and selfish wrongdoing. Small wonder that confidence languishes, for it thrives only on honesty, on honor, on the sacredness of obligations, on faithful protection, on unselfish performance; without them it cannot live. Restoration calls, however, not for changes in ethics alone. This Nation asks for action, and action now.

Our greatest primary task is to put people to work. This is no unsolvable problem if we face it wisely and courageously. It can be accomplished in part by direct recruiting by the Government itself, treating the task as we would treat the emergency of a war, but at the same time, through this employment, accomplishing greatly needed projects to stimulate and reorganize the use of our natural resources.

Hand-in-hand with this we must frankly recognize the overbalance of population in our industrial centers and, by engaging on a national scale in redistribution, endeavor to provide a better use of the land for those best fitted for the land. The task can be helped by definite efforts to raise the values of agricultural products, and with this the power, to purchase the output of our cities. It can be helped by preventing realistically, the tragedy of the growing loss through foreclosure of our small homes and our farms. It can be helped by insistence that the Federal, State, and local governments act forthwith on the demand that their cost be drastically reduced. It can be helped by the unifying of relief activities, which today are often scattered, uneconomical, and unequal. It can be helped by national planning for, and supervision of, all forms of transportation, and of communications, and other utilities which have a definitely public character. There are many ways in which it can be helped, but it can never be helped merely by talking about it. We must act and act quickly.

It is to be hoped that the normal balance of executive and legislative authority may be wholly adequate to meet the unprecedented task before us. But, it may be, that an unprecedented demand, and need for undelayed action, may call for temporary departure from that normal balance of public procedure.

I am prepared under my constitutional duty to recommend the measures that a stricken nation in the midst of a stricken world may require. These measures, or such other measures as the Congress may build out of its experience and wisdom, I shall seek, within my constitutional authority, to bring to speedy adoption.

But in the event that the Congress shall fail to take one of these two courses, and in the event that the national emergency is still critical, I shall not evade the clear course of duty, that will then confront me. I shall ask the Congress for the one remaining instrument to meet the crisis: broad Executive power to wage a war against the emergency, as great as the power that would be given to me if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe.

For the trust reposed in me, I will return the courage and the devotion that befit the time. I can do no less.

We face the arduous days that lie before us in the warm courage of the national unity; with the clear consciousness of seeking old and precious moral values; with the clean satisfaction that comes from the stern performance of duty by old and young alike. We aim at the assurance of a rounded and permanent national life.

We do not distrust the future of essential democracy. The people of the United States have not failed. In their need they have registered a mandate that they want direct, vigorous action. They have asked for discipline and direction under leadership. They have made me the present instrument of their wishes. In the spirit of the gift I take it.

In this dedication of a Nation we humbly ask the blessing of God. May He protect each and every one of us. May He guide me in the days to come.

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# Activity III - HOMEWORK

## “The Making of a President”



### Homework Assignment

Read the hard copy of FDR’s first Inaugural address. Choose and answer five of the listed questions that you find of most interest to you. Be prepared to discuss the questions in class.

- Pick out famous quotes from the speech. What are the quotes and why are they important?  
What were the situations of the Nation, which FDR addressed?  
Does this remind you of any modern day National situations? What are the parallels?
- Is there a commonality between FDR and the American people? Why or Why not?  
Does he give forth an air of confidence or insecurity? What does this offer the American people?  
What are the significant points he makes about our Nation? What strength does he offer?  
Who are the self-seekers he speaks about and why?
- What parts of his speech do you strongly identify, agree, or disagree with and why?  
Find some of the resolutions he offers to correct the problems? Did he suggest any resources for these corrections? What are they?  
How did he connect the physical landscape to the solutions?  
What is your impression of FDR as a leader based on this speech?
- FDR applied deliberate and purposeful vocabulary in his speech to give it the feeling of strength, power, security, confidence and empowerment. Did he use his words appropriately? Give Examples. Using the same type of vocabulary defend a current issue from your point of view.
- How could we utilize the lessons in this speech today?  
In the speech how did FDR challenge, motivate, and implore the American people? What did he ask them to do?

## Activity III - Student Assignment & Directions



1. As a class, listen to the audio-CD of FDR's First Inaugural Address.
2. Your homework assignment is to take home the hard copy of FDR's first Inaugural speech and answer the question on the take home sheet.
3. In class the teacher will assign you to one of four groups. Each group will take on a character role of people during the Depression (farmers, unemployed, urban entrepreneurs, or families).
4. Your group will be given a scenario and debate questions. Read the scenario as a group, and then read and discuss the debate questions. As a group you should prepare to present your situation in a debate format to present to the class.

## Activity III - Group I – An Unemployed American



### Debate Question:

You are an unemployed person. What in FDR's inaugural address is most important to you and why? What problems and concerns do you see with some of FDR's solutions? Does his speech bring you any hope or despair? What do you think should be done?

### Scenario:

Everyone needs food, clothing, and shelter. Thousands of people have lost their jobs, homes and farms. In fact in 1932, more than 12 million U.S. workers were unemployed. You have just lost your job, which was no fault of yours. The company you worked for had to lay 30 people off or their business would fail. You just happened to be one of those unlucky people. However, you are not alone. It seems like everyone is out of work.

You spend hours on the unemployment line, only to be turned away. You find yourself on many other lines, including bread and meal lines. Things are getting even worse as cities and counties are running out of funds to feed the unemployed. You never thought you would take charity, but are happy to receive it when it comes your way. You would gladly work for a meal, but there is no work. You are so lost and see no way out of this downward spiral. You are feeling very down in the dumps. With nothing in your pocket and only a shirt on your back you need to find a way to survive. Will you be resourceful enough? Could the government Step in to help change this economical downfall?

Perhaps your chances would be better if you took to living in a Hooverville shanty just outside of the city, like so many other unemployed people were doing. You could build a shanty out of anything you could find, cardboard, metal, wood, or used rubber. At least you would have a place to call home. However, you are aware that these shantytowns bring about many problems including hunger, crime, and disease because there is no running water or electricity.

In frustration you reflect on the country's situation and you are astounded. How could a country with such abundant resources, the largest skilled labor force, and the most productive industry in the world fall into a depression? Why are people going hungry in a country that has the largest food surplus in the world? Was it because the Hoover administration supported high taxes on international goods, making it impossible for many US industries to sell their goods on the international market? Was this the culprit of the huge number of employee layoffs? Why did his administration continue to refuse support of government relief efforts? How could he expect the American people to have confidence in the government and the economic system with such huge unfixable problems?

Perhaps, the answer lies with the new President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, could his ideas and relief programs turn things around? You are beginning to think that maybe this new President may have some answers. But for now you will think about building a shack in the shanty town down by the river, and about where you will get your next meal.

## Activity III - Group II – Farmers



### Debate Question:

As a farmer, what in FDR's inaugural address is most important to you and why? In his speech he mentioned several grim situations that the country was facing. What were those situations? Do you believe FDR supports farmers, in what ways? Does his speech bring you any hope or despair?

### Scenario:

You feel like you are one of the lucky ones. You live on a remote farm several miles away from town. You have a garden, milk, butter, cheese, eggs and meat from your animals. However, there is no electricity in your home. You pump your water from an outdoor hand-crank pump, cook and heat with wood, your bathroom is an outhouse, and you light your home with a kerosene lantern.

Men walking by on your dirt road stop and knock on your door asking for a meal in exchange for work such as stacking firewood. You oblige them a meal, but have no money to spare. With your bare income you are unable to purchase items you need. Instead you reuse everything; nothing is put to waste. You patch and re-sew your clothing for other purposes. You fix your broken down tractor over and over again.

In the 1920's you began increasing your farm food production to meet the demand of consumers. But after WWI ended in 1919 the demand dropped sharply and so did the prices. You are having a hard time finding a market to sell your produce. Your income has dropped to an impossible amount. You owe money to the bank and have no way of making your payments. You may lose the farm.

To make matters worse you have heard about the farmers in the mid-west losing their farms due to the drought. They are saying they just watch their fields being blown away by the wind, leaving the remaining soil cracked with lack of moisture causing the crops to turn green to brown. This brings pity and fear to your heart.

You wonder about the new President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and if his ideas and programs will make anything better for the farmers. You are beginning to think that the government has some responsibility in all of this. But you have little time before you may lose your farm.

## Activity III - Group III – An Urban Entrepreneur



### Debate Question:

As a business owner, what in FDR's inaugural address is most important to you and why? What problems and concerns do you see with some of FDR's solutions? Does his speech bring you any hope and comfort?

### Scenario:

You are the owner of a manufacturing plant and ever since the crash of 1929 you have had trouble selling your goods. If the stock market crash didn't cause enough problems, then the Hoover administrations support of high taxes on international goods made it impossible for many businesses, including yours, to sell goods on the international market. This has been devastating for your business.

To make matters worse so many people are now unemployed, and have lost their bank savings, making it impossible for them to make purchases. With this further decline in purchases you can't afford to keep all of your employees. You have had to lay off 40 workers and things are not any better since the lay off. You may have to fire more workers in order for your business to survive. This saddens you greatly, as your employees have been true and hard workers. It is difficult for you to put people out on the street. You wish you could help them but you have your own worries.

Other businesses in the area are closing down. It seems that everything is going in a downward spiral. You are not alone in your fear of failure. It is not just the fear of failure that upsets you, but the inability to care for your families basic needs if your business folds. You are not sure what the answer is. You are looking for strong leadership and direction to bring your business back. You wonder if the new President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, has the ability to turn things around. You are beginning to think that he may be a good leader. However, you are concerned that his ideas will not be fruitful. You are still up set with the Hoover administration and sort of blame them for the economies failure. You are willing to try new things but not at the risk of your failing business. You need some proof that the new Presidents plans are going to work; but then again nothing else has been working.

## Activity III - Group IV – An American Family



### **Debate Question:**

As a family, what in FDR's inaugural address is most important to you and why? Are families offered support in this speech? What problems and concerns do you see with some of FDR's solutions? Does he propose any solutions to reduce the financial burden associated with large families? Does his speech bring you any hope or despair?

### **Scenario:**

You are a family of seven and you don't have much, but you get by. You all work, when you can find a job, including the children. Life is difficult for everyone these days. Back in the 1920's things were a whole lot better. The economy was strong and your family could afford to buy an automobile and household appliance, although the appliances were bought on credit. You even dabbled in the stock market and had money in your savings account. But you lost your savings in the crash of 1929. That was just the beginning of your troubles.

Now your family is surviving from week to week with only a couple of dollars to spare for food. Two of the oldest children had to leave home and have taken to riding the rails in order to find work in other states. You are really learning the true value of a dollar, and to appreciate what you have. You see some of your friends having to use script instead of money to pay their debts. You feel fortunate and are discovering that you want to help others, but you have little resources to help others.

There is one good thing arising from these difficult times. You are developing closer friendships with your neighbors. You are also able to enjoy some forms of entertainment that cost very little. On Saturday nights friends and family gather together for a barn dance. Fancy clothing is not needed and you don't have to worry about it costing anything. All you need is for someone to bring an old record player or radio and the fun will begin. Or maybe you could save just enough money to go see a gangster or comedy movie. This is just what you need to forget your troubles for awhile, but in the morning it's back to the same worries.

You wonder about the new President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and if his ideas and programs will change anything, making life better for all Americans. You begin to think that the government has some responsibility in all of this and that it should care for the poor as well as regulating the economy.