

TEACHER'S GUIDE  
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MISSION 5: "Up from the Dust"

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**"Bonus Ouster Disgrace"**

*During the summer of 1932, thousands of World War I veterans descended on Washington D.C. to demand early payment of their wartime bonus payments and camped out in the city, awaiting Congressional action. On July 28, 1932, President Hoover used the army to force the remaining Bonus Marchers out of their main campground and set fire to their tents. Americans were horrified by this treatment of the poor and desperate veterans. Three months later, Hiram Johnson, a senator from California, addressed the event in a speech.*

One of the blackest pages in our history was written with fire and sword after the adjournment of Congress. Some thousands of worn and tattered veterans assembled in Washington during the session to beg for work on the payment of their adjusted compensation certificates. I saw these men daily and talked often with many of them. I deny they were either vicious or criminals. Their errand was futile and their march to Washington probably should never have been undertaken. But they had the right to come to the nation's capital.

They were the men who but a decade ago were proclaimed the heroes and the saviors of the republic. Their plight was pitiable, and I never saw more moving sight than these tattered veterans proudly marching despite their condition behind the Stars and Stripes. They were orderly and guilty of neither violence or crime in Washington.

The President sent against these men, emaciated from hunger, scantily clad, unarmed, the troops of the United States army. Tanks, tear-bombs, all of the weapons of modern warfare were directed against those who had borne bravely the arms of the republic. The miserable shelters of the men were burned and in many instances they housed women and children, and the soldiers we had acclaimed so but fifteen years ago, who went with our cheers and our tears to fight our battles were ruthlessly driven from their camp, and at the sword's point herded into the shelterless darkness and the night.

Source: Senator Hiram Johnson. "Speech in Aragon Ballroom, Chicago, November 4," reprinted in *Chicago Herald and Examiner*, November 5, 1932.

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