

TEACHER'S GUIDE
Document Based Activity
Part 2: Neighbors in Need
MISSION 5: "Up from the Dust"

The Bonus March

A NOTE TO THE EDUCATOR

In 1924, Congress enacted the World War Adjusted Compensation Act, or "Bonus Act," which provided compensation to veterans of United States Armed Forces that served during the Great War (April 5, 1917, to July 1, 1919). Veterans received certificates based on the length of their service that were redeemable in 1945. After the Great Depression began in 1929, some veterans organized the "Bonus Expeditionary Force" (popularly called the "Bonus Army") and demanded the immediate payment of their certificates. The media referred to the gathering of veterans from all over the country in Washington D.C. in the spring and summer of 1932 as the "Bonus March." During this time, a bill was being debated in Congress to provide for the immediate payment of the certificates.

In this activity, students examine primary source documents exploring the experiences of the veterans and opinions about the early payment of the bonus. Guiding questions are provided for each document.

Steps to Complete

The following procedure is recommended for this activity and can be adapted based on your curricular goals and timing constraints:

1. Distribute primary source document(s) to students.
2. Have students work independently or in small groups to investigate the document(s) with the goal of learning as much as they can about the opinions of veterans, politicians, and the media.
3. Select guiding questions to help your students investigate each source. You can give your students all of the guiding questions, or choose a few to which they can respond.
4. Have students present their findings to the class or a fellow student and share what was learned.
5. Assign students to imagine they are concerned citizens in 1932, writing a letter to their representative explaining what they think should be done about the Bonus Act. Students can choose to either be for or against immediate payment of the bonus, but they should use the information they uncovered from the primary source document(s) to support their opinions.



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Extensions

Although the House of Representatives passed the Wright Patman Bonus Bill, which would have provided for the immediate payment of bonuses to the veterans, the bill was defeated in the Senate. Many of the marchers remained in campsites near the Capitol. Six weeks later, local police attempted to remove the veterans, shooting and killing two veterans in the process. President Hoover then ordered the US Army to evict the remaining members of the Bonus Army. Many of them were injured and arrested during the eviction. The Resources section of the "Up from the Dust" Educator's Guide contains resources that you can use with your students to learn about what happened during the confrontation and how people reacted to it.



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Bonus March
Guiding Questions

In Part 2 of "Up from the Dust," the Dunn twins are beginning to see the effects the economic problems are having on their neighbors. Frank meets a veteran who is going to join the "Bonus Army," a veterans' organization that demanded that the certificates that had been given to them for their service in the Great War be paid immediately instead of in 1945, as the government had promised. The primary sources in this activity illustrate different viewpoints about how the government should respond to the veterans' demands. You will be assigned one or several of these sources to review. As you review each source, use these questions to analyze it. Remember to look closely at the source and think deeply about what it tells you about the veterans' needs and how the government should respond.

Document 1: "7,000 in Bonus Army Parade in Capital, Orderly But Grim"

- What is the author's purpose?
- In what publication did the article appear? Who do you think was the audience?
- How does the author describe the marchers? What characteristics does the author emphasize?
- What is missing from this article? What additional information do you wish the author had included?

Document 2: "Give Them Their Bonus and Employment" Cartoon

- What is the artist's point of view? How is this point of view conveyed?
- In what publication did the cartoon appear? Who do you think was the audience?
- How are the two scenes in the cartoon similar? How do they differ?
- What elements are present in each scene that demonstrate equality vs. inequality?
- What questions does the document raise for you?

Document 3: W.W. Waters Memoir

- How does this passage describe veteran's experiences in the city of Portland?
- What is the author's point of view? How is it conveyed?
- What characteristics of veterans does the author emphasize? How are those characteristics conveyed?
- According to the author, what does the "bonus" represent to veterans? What do veterans really want?



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Document 4: Herbert Hoover, "Address at the Annual Meeting of the American Legion"

- Analyze the speech. What is the author's point of view? How is this point of view conveyed?
- Who was the audience? What clues are given about the opinions of the audience?
- How does the author frame or present the issue in order to persuade the audience?
- How does the author's opinion about the veteran's legislation fit into his general philosophy of what should be done to address the problems in the country, based on information you have learned by playing "Up from the Dust"?

Document 5: Letter from Mr. Jack Rast to Representative Patman

- What is the author's point of view? How is this point of view conveyed?
- Why did the author write the letter?
- What is the author's opinion about what the government should do for the veterans? What arguments are made to support this point of view?



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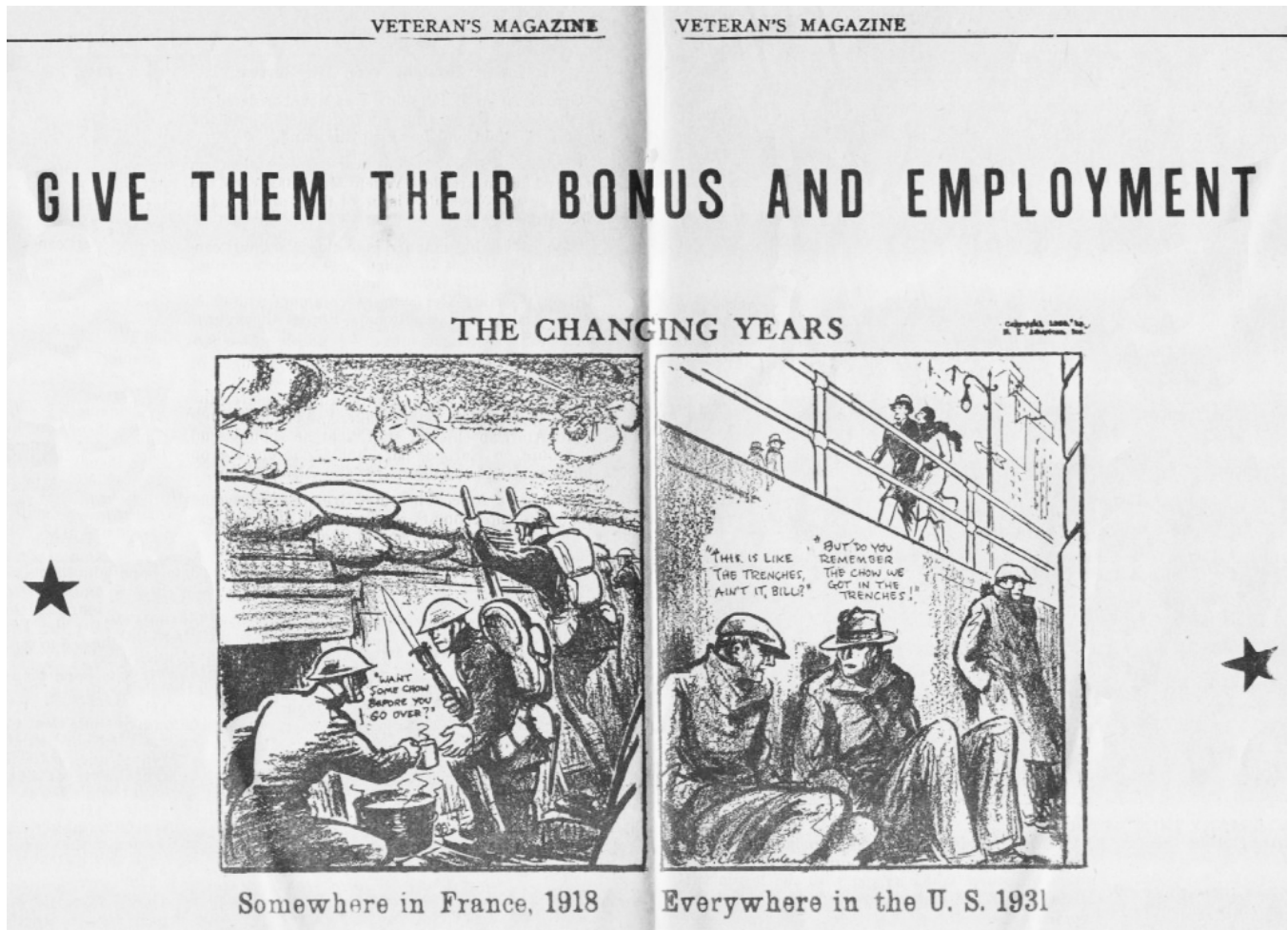
"7,000 in Bonus Army Parade in Capital, Orderly But Grim," *New York Times*, June 8, 1932, 1.

Selections from "7,000 in Bonus Army Parade in Capital, Orderly But Grim."	Glossary Terms
<p>An army of 7,000 ex-service men paraded up Pennsylvania Avenue tonight in motley uniforms but orderly ranks.</p> <p>One hundred thousand spectators lined the sidewalks, an unusually large turnout for this city, and applauded the marchers repeatedly.</p>	<p><i>Pennsylvania Avenue: Street in Washington D.C. connecting the White House and the Capitol.</i></p> <p><i>motley: different, not all the same</i></p> <p><i>ranks: orderly rows</i></p>
<p>It was the first formal gesture of the "bonus expeditionary force" in its campaign to [persuade] Congress to pay immediately the entire \$2,400,000,000 called for by their [veterans' bonuses].</p>	<p><i>gesture: an action to communicate a position or an intention</i></p>
<p>Its purpose was to show Congress the determination of the men to stay here until they collect what they contend is a debt, and at the same time it showed the city that it was face to face with a social problem that grows as new thousands of veterans roll in afoot and in box cars</p>	<p><i>contend: to state with confidence</i></p> <p><i>debt: something that is owed to another</i></p> <p><i>afoot: walking</i></p>
<p>First came the colors and pro-bonus banners of the massed units, and after them, in a place of honor, the veterans who had received medals for heroism. There were scores of these.</p>	<p><i>colors: a color or pattern used to show membership in an organization</i></p> <p><i>massed: involving many people</i></p> <p><i>scores: a great many</i></p>
<p>Then, in order came the six regiments. Most of the men showed the poverty that has caused them to come here. They were in every conceivable garb. . . . Most of them were coatless, some wore frayed suits, but almost to a man their shirts were freshly washed, though unironed, and their faces fresh shaven.</p>	<p><i>conceivable: able to be imagined</i></p> <p><i>garb: clothes</i></p> <p><i>frayed: clothing coming apart at the ends</i></p>
<p>There were even a few women and an uncomprehending baby or two, for a dozen wives had come here with their husbands . . .</p>	<p><i>uncomprehending: not understanding</i></p>



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"Give Them Their Bonus and Employment" Cartoon. *National Veterans Association of Enlisted Men Magazine*, Seattle, Wash., A.H. Robinson, 1931



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W.W. Waters and William C. White, B.E.F. *The Whole Story of the Bonus Army*. New York: The John Day Company, 1933. pgs. 6-10. <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001874081>

In the following memoir, World War I veteran W.W. Waters recalls the high unemployment and low morale he witnessed on the streets of Portland, Oregon during the first years of the Great Depression. Facing a similar situation himself, Waters helped found the Bonus Expeditionary Force, a collective of veterans who marched from Oregon to Washington D.C. in the spring of 1932 demanding immediate payment of their war bonuses.

Selections from <i>The Whole Story of the Bonus Army</i>	Glossary Terms
<p>In my ceaseless beating about the city I found family after family in the same general condition or worse. I saw men half clad, in threadbare clothing, pacing the streets in soleless shoes. On their faces was the same look, part of hope, part of bewilderment, as they searched for a chance to earn a few dollars at honest work. I talked with hundreds of these men and found that, with few exceptions, they wanted not charity but work that would enable them to lives and to regain their self-respect...</p>	<p>ceaseless: not ending half clad: not fully dressed threadbare: worn out bewilderment: confusion</p>
<p>These men did think and talk a great deal about the so-called Bonus. The name "Bonus" is unfortunate. It is not a gift, as the word implies. It is a payment of money to compensate those men who served in the Army for the difference in pay between that of service men and non-service men in 1918. The bill, asking payment in full of the adjusted compensation for wartime service, was introduced by Representative Patman of Texas and, during the early winter of 1931, was pending in Congress. The majority of veterans were hoping that it would pass.</p>	<p>compensate: pay compensation: payment</p>



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<p>These men had fallen far down into the valley of despair. Some push was necessary to start them out and up over the hill. Jobs would have provided the best sort of impetus but there were no jobs. The Bonus, a lump sum of money, could act in the same fashion. Debts could be met, doctors' bills paid, a fast fraying credit renewed, and one man could look another in the eye once more...</p>	<p>fraying: falling apart credit: confidence in a person's ability to repay money lent to them</p>
<p>The point, continually forgotten, is that the Bonus in these men's minds became a substitute or a symbol for that long dreamt of new start, a job. These men had nothing to which to look forward except to the shiny shoulders of the man in front of them in the breadline. Whenever I asked these men which they would rather have, the Bonus or a job, the replay was nearly always the same: "A job, of course. But where's a job coming from? I've looked every day for over a year and haven't found one."</p>	

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President Herbert Hoover, "Address at the Annual Meeting of the American Legion (September 21, 1931)"

Source: Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover Vol. 2: The Cabinet and Presidency, 1920-1933* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), 288-289.

Selections from "Address at the Annual Meeting of the American Legion"	Glossary Terms
<p>The world is passing through a great depression fraught with grueling daily emergencies alike to men and to governments... Some individuals may have lost their nerve and faith, but the real American people are digging themselves out with industry and courage. We have the self-containment, the resources, the manhood, the intelligence, and by united action we will lead the world in recovery.</p>	<p>fraught: filled with something bad grueling: very tiring self-containment: ability to take care of something by oneself</p>
<p>Today the National Government is faced with another large deficit in its budget. There is a decrease in the annual yield of income taxes Simultaneously we are carrying a high and necessary extra burden of public works in aid to the unemployed, of aids to agriculture and of increased benefits and services to veterans.</p>	<p>deficit: how much an amount of money falls short of what is needed yield: amount</p>
<p>Make no mistake. In these circumstances it is those who work in the fields, at the bench and desk who would be forced to carry an added burden for every added cent to our expenditures. We can carry our present expenditures without jeopardy to national stability. We can carry no more without grave risks.</p>	<p>at the bench: referring to workbenches used by carpenters and mechanics expenditure: amount spent jeopardy: risking danger stability: the strength to stand, continue to endure grave: serious</p>
<p>I am not speaking alone of veterans' legislation which has been urged for action at this convention, but I am speaking equally of demands for every other project proposed in the country which would require increased Federal expenditure. . .</p>	<p>veteran's legislation: refers to the bill sponsored by Representative Wright Patman (and known as the "Bonus Bill") that would pay veterans their bonus earlier than originally agreed upon</p>



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Committee on Ways and Means, House of Representatives, Payment of Adjusted Compensation Certificate. 72nd Congress, 1st session, April 11 to 29, 1932, pg. 11.

San Antonio, Texas, February 25, 1932

Representative Patman,

Dear Sir: The soldiers' bonus bill will soon come before the House. I ask you in the name of humanity to do all you can to put it over.

I have five little children and a wife who are insufficiently fed and are at this present moment hungry.

I have stood in water, mud, and filth up to my waist fighting for my flag, until now, broken in health, out of work, I am obliged to accept charity. To-day they left me a bunch of spinach and a small, very small, piece of meat to feed eight people.

My God, gentlemen, do you think have I no pride? Let me tell you, Representatives of the American people, I am as good an American citizen as any of you, and so were my forebears before me. I want work, not charity, and the people must have it.

If the Government will pay us what they owe us it will put just that much money in circulation, for there is no doubt that almost all of the World War men need money as badly as I do...

There are thousands of ex-soldiers in actual want right now. I know I am, for as God is my judge. There is not a single penny under this roof at this writing and none in sight, and furthermore, I am willing to make oath to everything I have written.

I have just read a draft of your bill in Congressional Record, and I want you to know I thank you personally, for what you have done for the soldiers.

Would to God there were more men in Washington like you—men who know what the Government owes us, and what is our due.

Mr. Patman, I thank you, so do my babies and my dear wife, and we all say God bless you.

Sincerely yours,
Jack Rast

