

Name: _____ Class Period: _____

The Age of FDR

Purpose:

This Crossroads Essay is an optional enrichment activity providing additional insight into the era. Students who complete this activity before they take the corresponding reading quiz will earn up to 10 additional points. *Read directions carefully.*

Directions:

As you **read the article**, *annotate* in the space provided along the right margin. *Use INK.*

Annotate by:

- a. **Highlighting** the **main ideas/arguments**,
- b. **identifying major themes** (BAGPIPE)
- c. **identifying historical context**
- d. **defining terms** you may not know. **(if it's bold... define it!)**

B eliefs and ideas (roles of ideas, beliefs, social mores, and creative expression in development of United States)
A merica in the world (global context of how United States originated and developed as well as its role in world affairs)
G eography (role of environment, geography, and climate on the development of United States and individual actions)
P eopling (migration, immigration, adaptation and impact of various groups on social and physical environments)
I dentify (development of American national identity, including focus on subpopulations such as women and minorities)
P olitics and power (changing role of government/state, the development of citizenship and concept of American liberty)
E conomy (work, exchange, technology) (development of American economy; agriculture, manufacturing, labor, etc.)

Franklin D. Roosevelt was the most influential American President of the twentieth century... That he won four terms of office (and thus became the only American President to serve more than two terms) is, at the same time, a reason for that influence and a reflection of it. FDR presented himself as the synthesis not merely of the Progressivism of his predecessors **Theodore Roosevelt** and **Woodrow Wilson** -- he claimed that his Administration's policies reconciled the enduring conflict between the great antagonists of American political thought, **Alexander Hamilton** and **Thomas Jefferson**. FDR proclaimed that his **New Deal** policies were designed to use **Hamiltonian means** to achieve **Jeffersonian ends** -- to use a vigorous, activist government to transform for the better the lives of ordinary Americans. No President except **Lincoln** has been so loved or so hated as Roosevelt...

Summarize the great debate between Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson. (you may want to revisit your notes from Period 3)	
Hamilton's Political Thought & Vision for America	Jefferson's Political Thought and Vision for America

This essay focuses on the great historical epic that took place between March 4, 1933, and April 12, 1945. It stresses four subjects :

- the nature of the New Deal(s),
- the crisis of political legitimacy precipitated in 1935-1937 by the contest between President Roosevelt and the United States Supreme Court,
- American participation in the Second World War (1941-1945), and
- the effects of the war on the American people.

In this period, American history was truly national in scope, bringing more of the American people together in exercises of national political activity and argument than ever before. The **age of FDR** *fundamentally changed the direction of American politics and governance*; it established models for identifying and dealing with national problems that still preoccupy the American people fifty years later. In many ways, the age of Franklin D. Roosevelt continues to this day.

I. The Two - or Three? - New Deals

In his still-unfinished history of the Age of Roosevelt, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., has identified two distinct subsets within the set of government initiatives and programs usually referred to as the New Deal. Despite a flurry of criticism from older New Dealers who rejected this view (apparently on the belief that to concede a shift of gears would damage Roosevelt's historical reputation), most modern historians accept Schlesinger's argument.

The first New Deal, the centerpiece of which was the **National Recovery**

Administration (known as the Blue Eagle from its popular symbol, accompanied by the slogan "We Do Our Part"), was based on the idea that government would play an active role in the economy by joining forces with business and labor in a cooperative relationship. Its ultimate goal (to the extent that the pragmatic Roosevelt ever had an ultimate goal beyond restoring the political legitimacy of the government) was state-directed capitalist planning. The NRA set out to organize the national economy, industry by industry, enabling each organized sector of the economy to regulate wages and prices and competition on the theory that planning would prevent further economic instability and would promote the growth needed to end the Depression. This version of the New Deal, the brainchild of economists such as Raymond Moley and Rexford G. Tugwell, never achieved the goals its planners had for it; *when in 1935 the Supreme Court invalidated the NRA, even Roosevelt secretly was glad to see it go*. (The other half of the first New Deal was the set of economic programs designed to bring direct federal relief to individual Americans.)

The second New Deal took a different tack entirely. It was the invention of lawyers, protégés of Justices Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., and Louis D. Brandeis, under the leadership of Professor (later Justice) Felix Frankfurter of Harvard Law School. This New Deal emphasized **Progressive-style reforms** to eradicate the causes of the Depression -- a set of regulatory measures and government agencies that would police the securities and banking industries and the borders of legitimate economic activity. It also developed, albeit hesitantly and piecemeal, a federal labor policy that recognized the legitimacy of organized labor as a major component of the American economy. Indeed, the only fragment of the legislation creating the NRA that survived Supreme Court challenge became the core of the **National Labor Relations Act**, which organized labor has honored for sixty years as its "bill of rights." And, like the first New Deal, the second New Deal shifted American values and expectations by *enshrining the idea of security for the individual American as a core element of the American political vision*; the **Social Security Act** was the key measure in this context (as were the surviving direct **relief programs** from the first New Deal).

There was also a **third New Deal** that existed largely in the hopes and desires and imagination of the American people. *Did the New Deal end the Depression, as many Americans came to believe after the fact? The answer is no* -- if by the Great Depression we mean the want and unemployment and economic stagnation that tortured the American people from the end of the 1920s onward. That Great Depression was swept away at the onset of the 1940s by the surge of production first anticipating and then responding to the Second World War. *But if by the Great Depression we mean something less quantifiable* -- the atmosphere of fear and despair that gripped the nation when its economy imploded -- then the third New Deal, *the New Deal as perceived by the American people in the 1930s, did end the Great Depression*.

II. The New Deal versus the Supreme Court: Separating Myth and Reality

Aside from the launching of the New Deal in 1933, the single most familiar New Deal story is that of the contest between the New Deal and the **Nine Old Men**. According to this story, the stodgy majority of the Supreme Court, held hostage by the doctrine of **laissez faire**, kept on shooting down New Deal legislation until, goaded beyond endurance and emboldened by his 1936 landslide majority, President Roosevelt challenged the Court directly. Roosevelt proposed that, because the Justices were elderly and tired and needed help, he would call for legislation permitting him to appoint new Justices to aid the incumbents with their work. His foes called the plan "**Court-packing**," and a titanic struggle ensued for the soul of the American Constitution. Finally, the Justices carried out an abrupt "switch in time" that took the steam out of the push to pack the Court. The story ends, as do many great American historical dramas, by giving everybody something. Roosevelt lost his plan but gained a more cooperative Court. The Justices saved the institution of the Court but gave in to Roosevelt and began to uphold New Deal measures. And the people got both a more cooperative Court and a renewed appreciation of their beloved Constitution.

Not quite. For one thing, the myth of the unflinching laissez faire Court is coming under fire. Professor Barry Cushman of St. Louis University Law School is completing a constitutional history of the New Deal; he rejects as overblown the traditional characterization of the Court as unflinchingly "laissez-faire" until the 1937 "switch in time" that defused the court-packing plan. For another, many of the New Deal measures that the Court struck down deserved to be struck down -- they were badly drafted, violating central constitutional principles, and the draftsmen knew or should have known what they were doing. Third, the so-called "switch in time" apparently was not a response to the Court-packing controversy; it represented two Justices' sincere belief that the specific law before them (the National Labor Relations Act) was free of constitutional defect and thus different from the laws they previously had struck down. Cushman's analysis of the actual doctrinal history of the Supreme Court is persuasive, but, nonetheless, the "conventional" story of the battle between creative uses of government power and laissez faire constitutional theory shaped both American constitutional law and the American people's understanding of how that law has developed over time.

III. The United States and the Second World War

It was the burden of the Roosevelt Administration ... economy competed equally with foreign policy for the President's attention. For most of Roosevelt's Presidency, the American people were so focused on national problems that they either had no time for international affairs or feared getting involved in a Second World War that might bring in its wake effects as disastrous and disappointing as those of the First World War had been. Roosevelt, who had served as Assistant Secretary of the Navy in **Wilson's Cabinet** and who had been the Democratic candidate for Vice President in 1920, was all too aware of the dangers of running ahead of the people's readiness to come to grips with foreign policy. Throughout the 1930s, as the foremost scholar of his foreign policy observes, he regularly engaged in "realistic calculation about what he could achieve at home and abroad" while preserving the traditional American role as a symbol of democracy for the rest of the world.

In 1939-1941, as war broke out in Europe, Roosevelt continued to move cautiously -- "to balance the country's desire to stay out of war against its contradictory impulse to assure the defeat of Nazi power." But, in the Pacific theatre, Roosevelt was more willing to act aggressively to contain Japanese ambitions for expansion -- in large part because he correctly perceived that the American people would endorse that policy. Unfortunately, for Roosevelt and for the nation, he miscalculated the ultimate Japanese ability and willingness to strike back against American pressure, and the result was the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the first foreign attack on American territory in decades.

The history of war...

*In the 1950s, 1960s, and even 1970s, it seemed relevant to emphasize such tactical and strategic issues as **General Douglas MacArthur's "island-hopping" campaign** in the Pacific War; the development of aircraft carriers and large-scale naval engagements in the Pacific; the development of submarine and antisubmarine warfare in both the Atlantic and Pacific theatres of combat; and the development of the tank as a key factor in land warfare, and of strategic bombing as the single most important factor of the air war.*

*...in part, they grew out of the need to understand the origins of the postwar world in the catastrophic damage the war brought throughout Europe and Asia; in part, they reflected the extraordinary impact of the war experience on the American nation, an impact also reflected in popular culture such as films (*The Longest Day*) and television series (*Combat*); in part, they were outgrowths of persistent American fears of the prospect of a new ground war in Europe between the free world and the **Warsaw Pact** alliance.*

In the 1990s, when the United States has its first President and Vice President born after the Second World War, the conflict has less immediacy than it once did...

*Another reason to examine the course of the Second World War is to address the **Holocaust** -- an event that, according to recent polling, 20 percent of American students and 22 percent of American adults believe possibly never happened. The Holocaust is an event in American as well as in world history -- because the United States failed to act at many times during the war to prevent or retard it, because many Holocaust survivors finally found refuge in the United States, or because many other American citizens (whether Jewish or Catholic in religion, or descended from Slavic and Gypsy ethnic groups targeted for exploitation and extermination, or gay or lesbian in sexual orientation) lost family members to the Holocaust or would have been at risk themselves had they lived in regions conquered by Nazi Germany.*

*When American forces (ironically, Japanese-American and African-American units) liberated such camps as Dachau and Buchenwald, they could not believe the horrors that they had found, and therefore were instrumental in reporting the news of the death camps to the rest of the world. **General Dwight D. Eisenhower**, the supreme Allied commander in Europe, ordered that local townspeople be forced to inspect the camps to confront the evidence of the crimes to which they had turned a blind eye, and the great CBS radio journalist Edward R. Murrow shocked the world with his eyewitness reporting of what he saw at Buchenwald. And the United States played a vital role in the organizing and conduct of the postwar **War Crimes Trials in Nuremberg** and Tokyo -- the first formal trials of individuals for "crimes against humanity," and a model for later attempts to punish those who commit acts of horror and brutality in wartime. The Second World War was an unparalleled showcase for the best and the worst of which human nature is capable. For this reason, teaching the war as a war -- both the heroism and the horror -- has value beyond its specific relevance or irrelevance to modern problems.*

Finally, the Second World War presents two key issues that preoccupy historians today:

- the decision to develop the atomic bomb and then to use it against **Hiroshima and Nagasaki** -- to develop the bomb, because it represented an epochal step in crafting the national-security partnership between government and the scientific community; to use it, because of the obvious moral issues such use raised.
- Roosevelt's policies toward the Soviet Union, which either secured the Allies vital support in defeating the **Axis powers**, or represented a catastrophic betrayal of the peoples of Eastern Europe and especially the Baltics, or both. Especially now, in light of the end of the **Cold War** and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, these questions are ripe for discussion.

IV. The War at Home

Wars have their effects on domestic concerns, whether social, political, economic, or cultural -- and the Second World War, the greatest war this nation has ever fought, is no exception. The Second World War continued and accelerated the transformation of American life begun by the various programs of the New Deal. For one thing, the explosion of war production effectively put an end to the privation and want of tens of millions of Americans. **War industries** were desperate for new workers, and Americans who either had been jobless or dependent on government "make-work" programs found new opportunity.

The war years also transformed American domestic life by drawing millions of American women into war industries and the work force. The legendary "**Rosie the Riveter**" symbolized the millions of women who either performed jobs abandoned by men who had been drafted into the armed forces or benefitted from the dramatic growth of war industries whose demand for labor outstripped the available supply of male workers. Except in times of crisis, most American men -- and even women -- could not accept that it was appropriate for women to work for wages in jobs traditionally reserved for men or understood as "man's work." However, the demands of the war economy, coming hard on the heels of the Depression and the New Deal, dramatically expanded society's understandings of what was appropriate for women in the American economy.

The war also brought a remarkable range of technological inventions in its wake. Radar made possible not only the conduct of aerial war on a global scale but the explosive growth of the international airline industry. Jet engines also revolutionized air travel, and rocket engines made possible both the ever-present threat of nuclear war between the 1950s and the 1990s and the space program of the decades following 1957. The war brought extraordinary improvements in the speed and reliability of airplanes and automobiles, transforming American ideas about the ease and desirability of cross-country or even international travel. The **massive war production** of the 1940s was a dress rehearsal for the explosion of postwar prosperity and **consumerism** of the 1950s.

Moreover, the war had dramatic influences on millions of American servicemen and servicewomen, and on the tens of millions of Americans on the home front. Far more than the First World War, the experience of the Second World War taught Americans to think of themselves as part of the entire world, and of the United States as the most powerful nation in the world. The war taught Americans to think of events in Asia or Europe as having either direct or important indirect effects on their daily lives. It planted foreign policy at the heart of American politics for generations, and in the process put the Presidency (the institution of government best adapted to take the lead in issues of war, peace, and diplomacy) at the heart of American public life. Finally, the horrors perpetrated by the totalitarian dictatorships, given frank and brutal airing in the war-crimes trials of the late 1940s, gave the world terrifying lessons about the dangers of unconstrained political power, the menace of racial and religious bigotry, and the value of democratic government and individual liberty.

Even though the war ostensibly was a war to vindicate democracy and equality against the threat of totalitarianism, American practices of segregation and discrimination continued both in American society and within the war effort. For example, United States armed forces remained segregated by race throughout the Second World War (President **Harry S Truman** ordered them integrated during the Korean Conflict). Even after the end of the Second World War, the heroism of African-American soldiers, sailors, and pilots was largely ignored and obscured until the rediscovery of African-American history by the larger society during the civil rights struggles of the 1960s.

The single greatest violation of individual rights and constitutional equality in the war years, however, was suffered by Japanese-Americans and resident aliens of Japanese ancestry. Even before the Japanese Empire's attack on **Pearl Harbor**, Hawaii, American law barred resident Japanese aliens from becoming naturalized citizens, and many states enacted and enforced laws limiting where persons of Japanese ancestry could live, whether and how much real property they could own, and what jobs they could hold. Although persons of Japanese ancestry born in the United States were citizens by birth, they, too, suffered discrimination at the hands of their neighbors.

Pearl Harbor, however, sparked a virulent hysteria aimed at anyone of Japanese ancestry, even Japanese-Americans. In late 1941 and early 1942, many Americans in the western United States feared that their neighbors would aid Japanese forces in a feared invasion, and that many Japanese aliens and Japanese-Americans already were spies and saboteurs. These fears were without foundation or reasonable basis. But fears within the civilian population and suspicion within the American military fed one another; state politicians (including California's Attorney General, Earl Warren) demanded that the government monitor or even round up all persons of Japanese ancestry. In February 1942, the War Department persuaded President Franklin D. Roosevelt to issue **Executive Order 9066**, under which the government forced more than 100,000 Japanese resident aliens and American citizens of Japanese ancestry living along the West Coast to abandon their homes, property, and businesses and accept forced relocation to concentration camps scattered throughout the nation. These camps continued in existence through the end of the war.

Despite the general public approval of Executive Order 9066 (fed in part by the media's unquestioning acceptance of the government's sanitized accounts of the origins of the internment camps and life within the camps), some internees resisted the government, claiming the protection of the Constitution. Four of them, including Fred Korematsu and Gordon Hirabayashi, took their cases to the United States Supreme Court. [*Korematsu vs the United States*] But the Court refused to strike down the internment, upholding Executive Order 9066 as a valid war measure; the Justices acted based in part on a record that contained severe falsifications of fact designed to persuade the Justices that the government had proof of the compelling need to protect the national security from the threatened treachery of some among the Japanese-American community. (The lies and fraud practiced on the Supreme Court by the War Department did not emerge until decades after the cases were decided.) Korematsu, Hirabayashi, and their co-plaintiffs had brought suit because they believed that the Constitution protected them as much as it did any other American citizen -- only to be told by the Supreme Court that they were wrong.

The **Japanese internment** is still the single greatest episode of violation of American civil liberties in the face of, and despite the plain meaning of, the Constitution. Only in 1988 did the United States government render a formal apology to Korematsu, Hirabayashi, and their fellow internees and adopt a system for the payment of some **reparations** to the surviving internees. Even this limited redress, however, had to overcome opposition from American veterans of the Pacific War and groups actuated by prejudice against people of Japanese ancestry. The Japanese internment cases have never been overturned by the Supreme Court; they remain a troubling lesson to the nation that constitutional safeguards of individual rights are little more than parchment barriers if a majority of Americans is willing to tolerate the trampling of the rights of a minority.