

Activity Two: Letters from Listeners

Student Worksheet

Student Name _____ Date _____

Instructions:

Below, you will find ten letters to FDR written by people after listening to his Fireside Chats. The first five are in response to his first Fireside Chat. The next five are in response to his second Fireside Chat. Read each letter, and answer the questions found beneath each.

Letter #1:

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/8126>

March 14, 1933

My dear Mr. President:

Several neighbors (Republican and Democrat) happened to be spending Sunday evening with Mrs. Cregg and myself when it was announced the radio that you were to talk on the banking situation in the United States at ten o'clock.

There was silence for a moment and then the discussion began. There seemed to be a wide divergence of opinion as to whether or not you were going to make good and whether or not you had the confidence of the people. They were unanimous, however, in agreeing that your Inaugural Address was a masterpiece, and that your message to Congress shot straight from the shoulder. Yet some were frantic and expressed the hope that your message would be such as to allow them to withdraw their life savings from some of the local banks. When your radio talk began everyone seemed to become hypnotized, because there wasn't a word spoken by anyone until you had finished and as if one voice were speaking all spoke in unison "We are saved." The frantic individuals of a few moments before declared that they would leave their money in the banks and that they were not afraid of the future. This episode convinces me more than ever that you have the confidence of the people, that you are the man of the hour, and that with the united support of all its people, you are going to rehabilitate this great nation.

May God bless you.

Sincerely,
Frank J. Cregg (Justice of the New York Supreme Court)
Syracuse, N.Y.
First National Bank Bldg
Cincinnati, Ohio

Questions about Letter #1:

- 1) List 1-2 portions of this letter that show the power of FDR’s use of the radio.

- 2) List one example of an issue or topic that the letter writer is highlighting in this letter.

Letter #2:

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/8126>

March 15, 1933

Dear Mr. President:

You cannot hear yourself talk over the radio, so you must accept the testimony of others. You have a marvelous radio voice, distinct and clear. It almost seemed the other night, sitting in my easy chair in the library, that you were across the room from me. A great many of my friends have said the same thing. I suppose hundreds have told you this, but I thought you would like to know how perfectly your message reached us. As for the message itself, it was clear, forcible and direct — a wonderful thing for the President of the United States to talk to the people as you talked to them.

With regards, I am,
Respectfully,
James A. Green

Questions about Letter #2:

- 1) List 1-2 portions of this letter that show the power of FDR’s use of the radio.

- 2) List one example of an issue or topic that the letter writer is highlighting in this letter.

Letter #3:

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/8126>

March 12, 1933

Dear President;

I would like to tell you that I enjoyed the speech which you have just finished giving. I have regained faith in the banks due to your earnest beliefs. I had decided that, as soon as the banks in Minneapolis reopened, I would withdraw my money. When you said that people's money would be safer in banks than under their mattresses I decided I'd leave my money just where it is.

Although I'm only a high school student I take a great interest in the country's problems. I firmly believe that the country is on the upward grade and I believe that if people will remain calm and composed that the government will pull the United States out of this terrible depression.

If you could possibly find a moment's time during your busy days would you please write a note back to me and acknowledge my letter?

God be with you and bless you," dear President.

Very respectfully yours,
Viola Hazelberger
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Questions about Letter #3:

- 1) List 1-2 portions of this letter that show the power of FDR's use of the radio.

- 2) List one example of an issue or topic that the letter writer is highlighting in this letter.

Letter #4:

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/8126>

March 13, 1933

Mr. President:

I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your splendid explanation of the Bank situation on last evening's broadcast over the National hookup. Out here on the Coast, we doubly appreciated this extra effort on your part to enlighten us, when our hearts are heavy and saddened by Friday's Quake, and our nerves still "on edge" by the continual tremors which we are still having; quite a severe one this morning at 5:00.

The broadcast brought you so close to us, and you spoke in such clear concise terms, our confidence in the Bank Holiday was greatly strengthened although I am sure the whole country is standing solidly back of you Mr. President in every move you make, and we all fully appreciate the fact that at last, we have another Great President in the saddle at Washington who will gradually, but surely, steer our Country out of the mess the last Administration got us into.

May I suggest that whenever it is possible, you speak from 1 to 5 minutes outstanding on any outstanding Governmental move at the beginning of a week day Coast to Coast program such as the Tuesday's Lucky Strike, Rudy Vallee or the Chicago Mert & Marge program, when the whole country is tuned in their program. I do not mean your talk to be a part of any program, but to get the radio time when most of the public are at home already tuned in., and I believe this will insure a greater audience. I find so many of my acquaintances missed you last evening because they were either on the way home from the Sunday's outing, or leaving for a place of amusement , or church. You see, you arrived here at 7:00, our time.

Mr. President, you have an unusually fine radio voice, and undoubtedly your campaign radio speeches is what piled up your tremendous majority of votes. Your voice radiates so much human sympathy and tenderness, and Oh, how the public does love that, on the radio especially. I realize it takes time to prepare radio talks; that is why I suggest short ones, but it is surely the best way to get things over to the public the way you want it done, and not the way the Press decides on. So many people are not taking any newspapers now, and yet they are a voting power and if kept in ignorance of National affairs, might be a menace or hinderance to Government functioning at times.

Please pardon my presumption, but I see by this mornings Los Angeles Times, that you have been eating most of your meals on a tray in your office the past week. In the name of "All that Holy", please, Oh please give your body the rest and care it needs. As you well know, there's a limit to human indurance. We all need you so very much, and no one can take your place at this time. It would be a terrible calamity if you should break under the heavy strain, so do TAKE the required rest you should have, even if you have to keep Kings or Queens waiting outside your door.

Why not have an easy reclining chair with a head rest in your office and receive your interviewers in an easy resting position? Your strength will hold out much better. I know

— have tried it and it works. One can think quicker and better when the head is resting on a pillow and the spine is relieved of all strain and weight.

You may have heard of this beautiful little town of 3500 inhabitants, 30 miles north of Los Angeles nestled in the foothills of the Sierra Madre Range, since Herbert Hoover, Jr. purchased a lovely estate here about a year ago, and his Mother (Mrs. Herbert Hoover) is now visiting him. Sierra Madre has always been a solid Republican town, and we poor Democrats got almost suffocated during the Campaign last fall, but I notice with great pleasure that most of the old hardheaded Republicans are now freely admitting that we have a Great Captain at the helm in Washington.

Dear Mr. President, I realize you are a far too busy man to read a single line of this humble message, but I do sincerely hope one of your Secretaries will convey our deep appreciation of your broadcast last evening and tell you about the suggestion of the week day programs and the easy reclining chair, or else tell Mrs. Roosevelt, so she can re-lay the suggestions at a convenient time.

Gratefully yours, for your supreme efforts and quick action in our Court; try's behalf,
Virginia Miller
Sierra Madre, California

Questions about Letter #4:

- 1) List 1-2 portions of this letter that show the power of FDR's use of the radio.

- 2) List one example of an issue or topic that the letter writer is highlighting in this letter.

Letter #5:

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/8126>

MARCH 13, 1933

Hon. Sir,

I listened gratifiedly to your radio address anent the banking situation this evening. From this humble quarter is reflected your own confidence of the future stability of the banking system. However, Mr. President, I beg to ask, "Then what?"

But a brief period ago it was an admitted fact that banks were busting with money. As you reminded us in our radio address tonight, banks must reinvest their depositors' money in sound securities. What banker, having the interests of depositors at heart, would venture to gamble these deposits on any business enterprise today?

Can ambitious and able merchants borrow capital at the bank on which to operate? If not, wherefore? Because the merchants' ambitions are unmoral? Because the merchants' representations are naught but a nefarious scheme to swindle? Or, is it because no business venture today could prosper under existing conditions?

In a brief note, Mr. President, I can only write in generalities, but permit me to express this much; having stabilized the banks, and established the soundness of America's financial "structure," you have made an impression| in your Herculean tasks by comparison as the vacancy created in a huge granary by the removal of one grain by the toiling ant.

You must be well aware of what yet lies before you. Let us be warned then, not to indulge in previous exultation, lest we relax our efforts ere we have attained the ultimate consummation of our aims.

I presumed to address you thus, Mr. President, because I am imbued with the idea that you would welcome expressions of this character from humble citizens.

Respectfully,
Eugene V. Krell
St. Louis, Mo.

Questions about Letter #5:

- 1) List 1-2 portions of this letter that show the power of FDR's use of the radio.

- 2) List one example of an issue or topic that the letter writer is highlighting in this letter.

Letter #6:

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/8127>

May 8, 1933

My dear Mr. President: —

I have just listened to your broadcast over the radio and feel that I have to write to you. I must tell you what effect your address to the people has had on me.

I am a member of the graduating class of the Abraham Lincoln High School of Brooklyn, New York and am not eighteen yet. Things aren't as nice at home as they might be. Bills keep coming in and Dad has to scrape up every cent he can get hold of to pay up. I see the way the world is treating him. With this staring me in the face I was a bit gloomy about my future. However, after listening to your speech, I feel as if there is a silver lining to every cloud. I feel inspired. I feel that if I go to college for more education I will not lose any opportunity that I might find during the four years to go to work. If, I, a high school student, am so affected by your speech you can very well realize how the rest of this country stands behind you.

When the next Election Day rolls around you may rest assured that many of this nation's youths will march to the polls for the first time and vote for Franklin Delano Roosevelt a second term in office of President of these United States of America.

I am now going to go to bed with a fervent prayer in my heart for you, try and God. May God bless you!

Yours sincerely,
Jack Hamovitz
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Questions about Letter #6:

- 1) List 1-2 portions of this letter that show the power of FDR's use of the radio.

- 2) List one example of an issue or topic that the letter writer is highlighting in this letter.

Letter #7:

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/8127>

May 8, 1933

My Dear President:

For 25 years, I have been an ardent Socialist, the soap box, the lecture platform, the classroom are the means that I have used to further the Cause. I have been in jail for it at times.

Since your inauguration, I have withheld judgement — for once in my life I have not used the expression "He is only a Henchman of the Capitlast classes" I have faith in you and the people I meet every day in the business world have faith in you. I hardly think that you realize the power that you really have over the American people. You don't half realize what faith they have in you and they are willing to follow you blindly. If I a Socialist trust you, I can see why they worship you.

Your speech to-night was magnificent — and remember when a soapboxer admits the other fellow speech is good — thats something Mr. President, this economic distress that we are suffering from is getting too much for us all to stand. If you will help alleviate some of the suffering I see every day well let the historians of the future draw the conclusion Well its a pleasure to listen to you — and Mr. President — I have a suspicion that you know your Karl Marx pretty well.

Good Luck to you and my best wishes to your family — who knows I am liable to call up my friend & comrade Norman Thomas three years from now & tell him I am out working for Franklin D. and I am going to vote for him and the party can throw me out if they want to.

As a former officer of the U.S.A. I salute the Greatest President since Lincoln.

Sincerely yours,
Harry N. Perlmutter
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Questions about Letter #7:

- 1) List 1-2 portions of this letter that show the power of FDR's use of the radio.

- 2) List one example of an issue or topic that the letter writer is highlighting in this letter.

Letter #8:

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/8127>

Eastern Sales & Export Dept.
Niagara Searchlight Co.
May 16, 1933
My dear Mr. President:

It is with genuine pleasure that I refer to your radio talk of Sunday night of May 7th. Dictators dictate, Mr President, Democrats discuss. The important difference is not so much in what they do, as the spirit in which they do it.

The dictatorship myth, woven so industriously about your excellency, was knocked over the fence on Sunday night. And it was all so simple. You took advantage of the radio and the great American Sunday evening at home, and for the second time talked over the problems of the day as a family matter with the families of the nation. You talked as easily and as informally as a neighbor who had just dropped in to visit the folks. There was no more authority, mystery or pose about your talk than in the old time political arguments around the stove and cracker barrel of a country store or in the old fashioned wooden Indian city cigar store. Truly Mr. Roosevelt you revived the modes and manners of the primitive forums of American democracy. The old town meeting is now a nation's meeting.

The simplicity of your language was matched by the clearness of the thought. The democracy of your good self was reflected in your use of a baseball term to make it plain to everybody. The value of the great American game in teaching men and women how to visualize social, economic and political set ups and conditions was forcefully demonstrated when you said "I have no expectations of making a hit every time I come to bat —what I seek is the highest possible batting average, not only for myself but the team".

Every man, woman and child over six knows exactly what it means. How could you say it so well and so plainly, if there was no game like baseball that everybody from president to street sweeper understands. Try to imagine a statement like yours coming from a Stalin, A Hitler, a Mussolini, A Kemal or a Gomez. For a dictator to picture himself as a mere member of a team playing a popular game would shatter the whole "front" of the dictatorship racket. But an American president can say it. It just fits.

You pictured yourself as a captain of a hall team - and we all know that the captain's success is dependent upon team work. What more perfect summary of the democratic idea and system. And how you caught and breathed the spirit of the hour. "We cannot ballyhoo ourselves back to prosperity" In seven words you summed up the lesson, that we have all learned from this depression, a lesson we have determined to remember.

Finally the clear statement of what you and the people want in the way of control of business. The dictionaries are crammed with long words which describe all the variations and shadings of the possible relations of government and private business. You used none of them. But you told your whole story in one word “partnership” — a word that is almost primer English, and has meant more in America than anywhere else.

On the frontier “pard” and “pardner” meant the whole idealism of men living and working together to solve the problems of pioneering. It is a word that recalls the log rolling, the husking bee, the barn raising - all the primitive co-operation that was woven into the American character when it was needed, and that is also the hope of our own age. Your economics and sociology is shown in the following - "It is wholly wrong to call the measures that we have taken government control of farming, control of industry, and control of transportation. It is rather a partnership between government and farming, and industry and transportation! - A partnership not in the profits. – A partnership in planning and partnership to see that the plans are carried out.

Partnership and dictatorship are at the two opposite poles of political thought and feeling — and never the twain shall meet. The grumpy men who insist on looking for gloom and who do not realize that America is not chained in slavery to worn-out ideas can sit in the dark corner and mumble the word “dictator” to themselves as long as they please. This country, under your great leadership, is going ahead without them.

It is the writer’s intention to visit Washington at some future date and it will be his pleasure to make the necessary arrangements to meet you.

Very respectfully yours,
James J. Dunn
Chicago, Ill.

Questions about Letter #8:

- 1) List 1-2 portions of this letter that show the power of FDR’s use of the radio.

- 2) List one example of an issue or topic that the letter writer is highlighting in this letter.

Letter #9:

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/8127>

May 8, 1933
Dear President:

Listened to your Radio address last night telling about what the National Legislature had done for the “Forgotten Man” Nothing has been done to help him according to my way of thinking.

Everything that has been done is constitutional you said in your address maybe so, but I demand you read the Declaration of Independence as you seem to have Forgotten that there is anything like equality for all the people of this land as all men are created equal. The Bier Bill that was passed does not help the Forgotten Man, it saves the rich from a large burden of income tax and makes the poor pay the millionaires their tax that’s legislation for the millionaire!

Taxes have been applied where they are already too burdensome, far exceeding ability to pay. Why apply more taxes to this class? Are the Farmer and Laborer expected to get a new Deal from the Democratic party but have been disappointed in their expectations. The Democratic party has had a great opportunity to do something for the people but does not seem to care to take advantage of the chance to go down in history as fighting the battle of the Forgotten man.

The Forgotten man will have to fight his own battle alone and without any help from the National Government as his demands are not heeded or listened to. I presume and know that you have the knowledge of the Farmers and Laborer Holiday “or Strike” which date to begin is set for – May 13 – 1933 This holiday has been called because the Farmer and Laborer has not received their demands from the National Legislature.

It is ridiculous for the Mortgage holders of this Nation to demand payment of interest when there is not enough money in circulation to even carry on the exchange of commodities necessary for the welfare of the people. I would write more a lot more but I feel that it is useless as it does not seem to have any effect whatever.

Hawkin Anderson
Clayton, Wisconsin

Questions about Letter #9:

- 1) List 1-2 portions of this letter that show the power of FDR’s use of the radio.

- 2) List one example of an issue or topic that the letter writer is highlighting in this letter.

Letter #10:

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/8127>

Law Offices
Sather & Livesey
Bellingham, Washington
May 8, 1933

Dear Sir:

I heard your radio address last night and regarded it as encouraging.

I classify myself as a conservative but realize that present conditions required measures that might not be justified under other circumstances. I sincerely hope that an effort will be made to keep the government out of business as much as possible and that we will not have such inflation as to make money and security values doubtful.

I have always been a Republican but desire to say that I am very pleased with your official acts and likewise am pleased to express to you that the general sentiment is ninety per cent in your favor. This is considerably more than the seventy-five per cent that you referred to in your address last night.

I hear very commendatory words about your economy program and particularly your striking from the pension rolls veterans whose condition is the result of non service ailment. You have the commendation of the people of this country and will continue to have it unless your measures become too extreme. At present you are "ace high".

With best wishes for your continued success, I am,

Sincerely,
George Livesey

Questions about Letter #10:

- 1) List 1-2 portions of this letter that show the power of FDR's use of the radio.

2) List one example of an issue or topic that the letter writer is highlighting in this letter.
