



A Curriculum Guide to:

***Fighting for the Forest: How FDR's Civilian Conservation Corps Helped Save America***

By P. O'Connell Pearson

**About the Book**

When Franklin Roosevelt took office in March 1933, the United States was on the brink of economic collapse and environmental disaster. Thirty-four days later, the first of over three million impoverished young men were building parks and reclaiming the nation's forests and farmlands in the Civilian Conservation Corps.

The CCC, FDR's favorite program, was considered a "miracle of inter-agency cooperation." Four separate departments, or agencies, ran the corps: Labor, the Army, Interior, and Agriculture. They recruited, trained, housed, clothed, and fed the young men; selected, planned, and oversaw projects in all forty-eight states and every US territory; and offered education programs in some 2,500 CCC camps. The effort resulted in the building and/or improving of

hundreds of state and national parks, the restoration of nearly 120 million acres of land, and the planting of some three billion trees—more than half of all the trees ever planted in the United States. The men who joined the CCC learned discipline and the value of hard work and team effort. Many developed skills that led to satisfying careers; over 40,000 learned to read; and 90 percent served in the military during WWII.

*Fighting for the Forest* tells the story of the CCC through the personal journeys of young men around the nation who restored America’s land and forests, helped support their families during the Great Depression, and paved the way for today’s environmental movements through their work in “Roosevelt’s Tree Army.”

### **Prereading Activity**

Share what you know about the Great Depression in small groups or as a class.

- What are some characteristics of economic depressions?
- What did people do to survive during the Great Depression?
- Who was the president of the United States during most of the Great Depression?

### **Discussion Questions**

(The questions below correlate to Common Core Standards CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8-1; RH.6-8.2; RH.6-8.5; RH.6-8.7; RH.6-8.8; RH.6-.9; RH.6-8.10)

#### **Chapter 1: Waiting for Hope**

1. Analyze the significance/meaning of chapter one’s title.
2. Why did President Herbert Hoover believe he had done all he could to help the country? What is your source for this answer? Use both the author’s and Hoover’s words.
3. What adjectives would you use to describe conditions in the US as Franklin Roosevelt became president?

#### **Chapter 2: Taking Action**

4. In what ways was Franklin Roosevelt well prepared to be president?
5. What led to FDR’s paralysis? How did the paralysis affect his political ambitions?
6. Read the full FDR quotation in chapter two that begins with, “No country, however rich, can afford the waste of its human resources.” Is this a primary or secondary source? How do you think it applies to his support for the CCC?

### **Chapter 3: Looking Back**

7. Create a time line of American attitudes toward natural resources or a time line of key presidents in US history and their land policies.
8. Describe the environmental issues the US faced during the 1930s.

### **Chapter 4: A Miracle of Cooperation**

9. Analyze the meaning of chapter four's title.
10. What characteristics did members of FDR's cabinet share?
11. Summarize Oscar De Priest's amendment to the Emergency Conservation Employment Act and why its passage was unusual and significant. What is your source?
12. Why did FDR think it was important to build national parks in the eastern United States?

### **Chapter 5: Into the Woods**

13. Why were women not allowed to join the CCC?
14. Describe a typical CCC recruit.
15. Describe a typical CCC camp. Use pictures from the book as well as text to gain information.

### **Chapter 6: What Will They Do, Mr. President?**

16. What happened to the people who lived on the land that became Shenandoah National Park? How did those people respond?
17. Why didn't the CCC use advanced technology and machines to make the work faster?
18. List some of the most common types of work the men of the CCC did in building Shenandoah National Park.

### **Chapter 7: Winning Support**

19. Why was FDR concerned about public support for the CCC? Use a primary source from the chapter to support your answer.
20. How did CCC camps help nearby towns economically? Give examples.
21. Describe the experience of African American and Hispanic recruits in the CCC.

## **Chapter 8: More Than Work**

22. List some of the opportunities offered to CCC recruits when they were not working. Which do you think had the greatest impact on the young men?

## **Chapter 9: Across the Country**

23. Describe two kinds of CCC projects outside the parks.
24. What adjectives would you use to describe Ed Hill's experience in the CCC?
25. How did the CCC improve its safety record over time?

## **Chapter 10: Moving On**

26. Why did many adult men suffer from depression during the economic crisis?
27. How did experience in the CCC prepare young men for military service during WWII?
28. Find two or three quotations from former CCC enrollees. Describe their feelings about their experience.

## **Chapter 11: Lasting Legacies**

29. Make two columns. In one column list negative outcomes of the CCC's organization and projects. In the other column, list positive outcomes. Discuss with a partner.

### **Extension Activities**

(The activities below correlate to Common Core Standards CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8-1; RH.6-8-3; 3H.6-8-4; RH.6-8.7; RH.6-8.10)

#### **1. Primary and Secondary Sources**

Look through the sources listed in the book's bibliography and identify ten primary sources and ten secondary sources. Be sure you can explain why you identified each source as you did.

#### **2. Vocabulary**

As you read, make a chart of words or terms that were new to you or that you were unsure of, particularly words or terms related to government, history, or economics. Define each word or term and choose ten words to use in sentences.

#### **3. CCC Geography**

- On a map of your home state, mark the locations where the CCC worked. Conduct research to find out if any CCC camps or structures still exist in your state.
- On a map of the United States, mark the parks, forests, or historic sites you have visited. Conduct research to find out if the CCC worked in any of those places.

#### **4. Time Line**

Create a time line of significant conservation and environmental projects and legislation in the US since 1933.

#### **5. You Are the Reporter**

Imagine you are a reporter in 2003, the seventieth anniversary of the CCC. You plan to attend a reunion of CCC men who are now in their late eighties and nineties. Make a list of questions you would like to ask them.

#### **6. You Are the Recruit**

Find the location of a CCC camp near your home and the kind of work the men did there. Imagine that you are a member of a unit at that camp, and write a letter home describing your experience to your family. Be sure to use information from pictures as well as text.

*This guide was created by the author of Fighting for the Forest, P. O'Connell Pearson. She is a former history teacher with a master's degree in education from George Mason University. She has contributed to and edited history textbooks and published articles in magazines and newspapers including The Washington Post. Always enthusiastic about sharing the stories of history, she earned her MFA in writing for young people from Lesley University and now writes both historical fiction and nonfiction.*

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