

CHAPTER
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Section 2

SKILLBUILDER PRACTICE *Identifying Problems*

To identify problems in history, find and summarize the difficulties a group of people faced at a certain time. By pointing out and explaining problems, you can develop a thorough understanding of the situation. During the Great Depression, Franklin Roosevelt was elected president of the United States. The excerpt below is from a campaign speech Roosevelt delivered on September 23, 1932. As you read the speech, identify the problems in American society that Roosevelt saw. Remember that problems can be directly stated or implied. Then complete the activity that follows. (See Skillbuilder Handbook, p. 993.)

A glance at the situation today only too clearly indicates that quality of opportunity, as we have known it, no longer exists. Our industrial plant is built; the problem just now is whether under existing conditions it is not overbuilt.

Our last frontier has long since been reached, and there is practically no more free land. . . . There is no safety valve in the form of a Western prairie, to which those thrown out of work by Eastern economic machines can go for a new start. . . .

Recently a careful study was made of the concentration of business in the United States. It showed that our economic life was dominated by some six hundred odd corporations, who controlled two-thirds of American industry. Ten million small business men divided the other third. More striking still, it appeared that if the process of concentration goes on at the same rate, at the end of another century we shall have all American industry controlled by a dozen corporations, and run by perhaps a hundred men. . . .

Clearly, all this calls for a re-appraisal of values. A mere builder of more industrial plants, a creator of more railroad systems, an organizer of more corporations, is as likely to be a danger as a help. . . .

Our task now is not discovery or exploitation of resources, or necessarily producing more goods. It is the soberer, less dramatic business of administering resources and plants already in hand, of seeking to re-establish foreign markets for our surplus production, of meeting the problem of underconsumption, of adjusting production to consumption, of distributing wealth and products more equitably, of adapting existing economic organizations to the service of the people. The day of enlightened administration has come.

from Franklin D. Roosevelt, Address to the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco, September 23, 1932. Reprinted in the New York Times, September 24, 1932.

Imagine that you are a news reporter covering the presidential campaign of 1932 for your radio station. Prepare a report of Roosevelt's speech to deliver to your radio audience. In your report, summarize the problems the candidate stated directly or implied in his speech.
