

# The VOTE Textbook

## Student Notes

### Chapter 8: Agriculture

#### Discussion Story: The Dust Bowl

Agriculture is the science and practice of farming for the purpose of growing crops and raising animals to sustain us with food and clothing.

#### The Golden Moment

Shared Problem: Instability in farming threatens food security

Shared Goal: A secure food system

#### Understanding the Issue of Agriculture

In 2017 more than 900 million acres in the U.S. were used for farming. Almost 70 percent of the farmland was controlled by the top 10 percent of farming enterprises, called big ag (big agribusiness) or corporate ag.

Farmers have been subsidized since the Department of Agriculture (USDA) was created by President Lincoln in 1862.

President F. D. Roosevelt signed the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933, which we now refer to as the first Farm Bill. The Farm Bill is the federal government's policy to address everything related to agriculture, including farming, ranching, nutrition, and more.

In 1938 Congress passed a new version of the Farm Bill and agreed that the issue of agriculture was so important that it should be reconsidered every five years moving forward.

#### Types of Subsidies

- Crop insurance

- Loan programs for farmers
- Disaster assistance
- Direct payments
- Conservation reserve
- Crop commodity programs
- Food promotion
- Agricultural research

More than one hundred different crops are subsidized. The top five have traditionally been wheat, corn, rice, soy, and cotton.

### Voices on Agriculture

#### Conservative

Response to discussion story: When the government decided to give away land for free, farmers didn't make profit-based decisions and ended up destroying the land.

Voice: Pages 227-230

Summary: Page 231

Talking Points: Page 232

#### Liberal

Response to discussion story: It was right for the government to open up more land for farming to feed the nation, but more oversight was needed to protect the land.

Voice: Pages 233-236

Summary: Page 237

Talking Points: Page 238

#### Radical

Response to discussion story: Driven to make a profit in capitalism, private owners with no ties to the community prioritized short-term gains, which devastated the land.

Voice: Pages 239-242

Summary: Page 243

Talking Points: Page 244

Shared Outcome: A secure food system for the nation.

Activity: Debate, "Point Counterpoint," Page 246