

TEACHER'S GUIDE
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MISSION 5: "Up from the Dust"

World War I Veterans March in Washington

In the summer of 1932, facing unemployment and poverty because of the Great Depression, veterans of the Great War (now known as World War I) began demanding that the bonuses be distributed immediately. Nearly 20,000 veterans marched to Washington and camped out in the Anacostia Flats section of the city; newspapers called them the "bonus army." This New York Times article describes a June march by some of the veterans down Pennsylvania Avenue, the street in Washington on which the White House is located.

An army of 7,000 ex-service men paraded up Pennsylvania Avenue tonight in motley uniforms but orderly ranks.

One hundred thousand spectators lined the sidewalks, an unusually large turnout for this city, and applauded the marchers repeatedly.

It was the first formal gesture of the "bonus expeditionary force" in its campaign to [persuade] Congress to pay immediately the entire \$2,400,000,000 called for by their [veterans' bonuses].

Its purpose was to show Congress the determination of the men to stay here until they collect what they contend is a debt, and at the same time it showed the city that it was face to face with a social problem that grows as new thousands of veterans roll in afoot and in box cars...

First came the colors and pro-bonus banners of the massed units, and after them, in a place of honor, the veterans who had received medals for heroism. There were scores of these.

Then, in order came the six regiments. Most of the men showed the poverty that has caused them to come here. They were in every conceivable garb...Most of them were coatless, some wore frayed suits, but almost to a man their shirts were freshly washed, though unironed, and their faces fresh shaven.

There were even a few women and an uncomprehending baby or two, for a dozen wives had come here with their husband...

Source: "7,000 in Bonus Army Parade in Capital, Orderly But Grim," *New York Times*, June 8, 1932, 1.

